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Contents

The RING EXTRA

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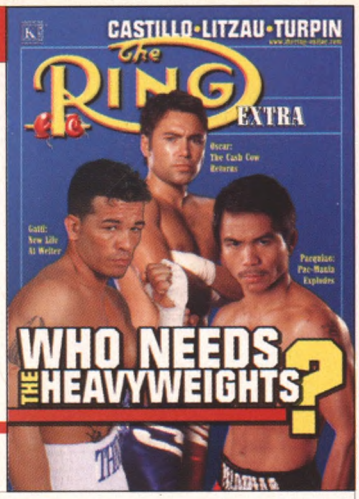

Arturo Gatti by **Duane Long**
Oscar De La Hoya by **Greg Gorman**
Manny Pacquaio by **Chris Farina**

Cover Design by **David Romanosky**

Features

30 De La Hoya-Mayorga
The Fight That Will Decide Oscar's Future
By William Dettloff

36 A License To Thrill
Pac-Mania Explodes Worldwide!
By Don Stradley

46 The Race To Fight Baldomir
Will Gatti Cross The Finish Line First?
By David Mayo

54 Tough Guy Fights Under The Caution Flag
Can Castillo Get It Back In Gear For Corrales?
By Ivan Goldman

60 From The Edge Of Death To A Fighting Chance
Boxing Puts One Of Its Own Back On Two Wheels
By Ted Lerner

66 Jason Litzau's Life On The Edge
More Than Just Another Nutcase?
By Eric Raskin

72 Fighting Jack Looks Back
The Inside Story Of The Turpin Brothers
By Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Ringside Reports

80 Fighter Of The Month & Ringside Reports

Ratings

15 Ratings Analysis

16 The Ring's International Ratings & Records

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Departments

6 **Ringside** *by Nigel Collins*

8 **Round One**

18 **Ryan Out Loud** *by Jeff Ryan*

20 **Digging Deep** *by Ivan Goldman*

26 **Camera Clicks**

28 **New Faces: Elio Rojas**
by Joe Santoliquito

78 **Worldwide Fight Results**

92 **Flashback: August 1964**

94 **The Fight Doctor** *by Margaret Goodman, MD*

96 **Come Out Writing**

98 **Looking Ahead** *by Joe Santoliquito*

[Ringside]

Volume 85, No. 4 June 2006

The RING

One of the major sources of complaint is change. Most of us hate change, which is understandable but frequently a big waste of time and energy—because just about the only thing we can count on is that nothing stays the same forever. Of course, not all change is good, but some of the changes in boxing perceived as negative aren't really that bad. It's just a matter of how you look at them.

I hear and read a lot of grumbling about the International Boxing Hall of Fame, much of which centers on the quality of the boxers elected. Many feel that the standard for admittance has dropped so low that a lot of undeserving fighters now have plaques on the wall in Canastota, New York. And if you compare the boxers who were voted into the old RING magazine Hall of Fame to some of those currently enshrined in the IBHOF, you'll soon see that those complaints are, in a number of cases, valid. But there are times when you have to sacrifice one thing in order to gain another.

THE RING magazine's Hall of Fame was never more than a paper hall. For a number of years, visitors to the editorial office could see the plaques and a small amount of the memorabilia displayed, but there was never a specific building dedicated to THE RING Hall of Fame. It was, at best, a modest way of honoring boxing's finest, but never a major attraction like the football or baseball halls of fame.

I always felt that boxing deserved more than a few dusty relics hanging on office walls, and was delighted when Ed Brophy launched the IBHOF and came up with the funding to build a site to house it. It too was a modest venture to start, but has grown considerably over the years, and I've never regretted my decision to set aside THE RING's hall and support the IBHOF.

But running an organization like the IBHOF takes a lot of money, and the major source of that income is the annual Induction Weekend. An essential part of this four-day festival is having living inductees present, as it's next to impossible to draw a big crowd to watch dead fighters' relatives accept the honor.

The problem is that as time goes by and more and more fighters are inducted, the talent pool has become shallow, and names pop up on the ballot that might never have been there under the far stricter criteria used prior to the emergence of the IBHOF.

You might think that I would be appalled by this turn of events, but I'm not. I've experienced the magic of Induction Weekend and know what a marvelous event it is, and not just for the fans that flock there in increasingly larger numbers. The reception the aging fighters receive is like a king-size gulp from the fountain of youth. Many have been half forgotten in the years since they stopped boxing, but in Canastota they are champions again, if only for a long weekend. And the look in their eyes and the new spring in their step is something that money can't buy.

Yes, instead of only the absolute crème de la crème of the boxing world, there are a handful of fighters enshrined who would not have been included under a stricter standard. But, for me, Induction Weekend at the IBHOF has become more than just a ceremony to honor the very best fighters. It is a joyous, one-of-a-kind celebration of the Sweet Science that is well worth the trade-off involved to keep it going.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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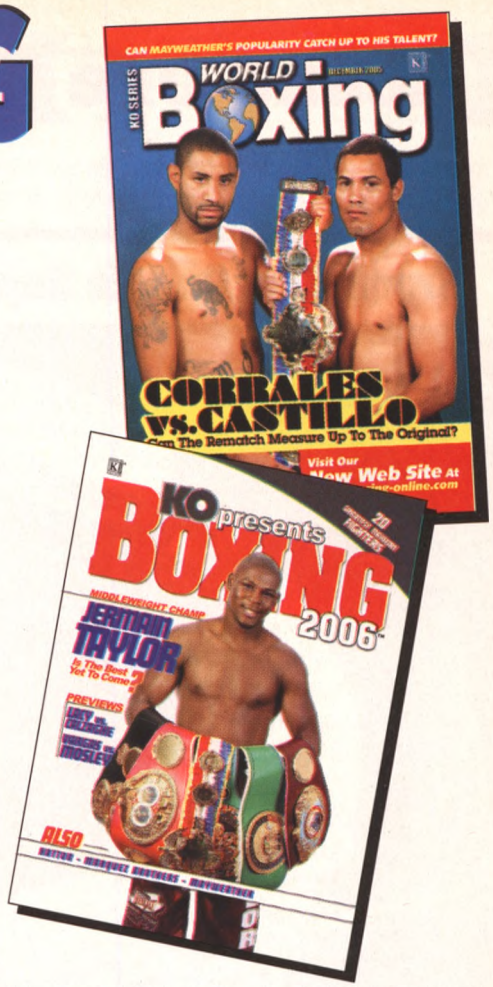

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ACBM06

Kronk Gym On Life Support

Hearns outside the gym he helped make famous

The Kronk Recreation Center is as much a part of Detroit boxing lore as Joe Louis. But the legendary facility, which once served as the incubator where Hall of Fame trainer Emanuel Steward developed Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns, Hilmer Kenty, Jimmy Paul, Duane Thomas, and brothers Milton and Steve McCrory, is fighting to remain open due to financial difficulties.

Steward, whose name is synonymous with The Kronk, has gone into high gear to generate funds to keep the building open.

A black-tie affair was held on February 2, called the "Super Fight Night Super Party," at the ritzy Fisher Theater in downtown Detroit, which would host Super Bowl XL three days later. Contrary to some published reports exaggerating the amount of money the event raised, the actual figure, according to Steward, was $22,000. Steward said he had to raise $150,000 by the fall to keep the gym going.

There was a general misconception that the Kronk's problems were solved with a $1.2-million donation coming from a casino, but Steward disputed that, since that money came from an unsubstantiated source.

"I can't respond to that, because I don't know where that money comes from, and when I looked into more, I didn't know who the guy was that was donating the money," Steward said. "When we looked into it, it was just something to give an Internet gambling site some attention. It's not any good. That means nothing. We still have to raise the funds to keep this gym open."

The main event of the night was cruiserweight Jonathon Banks stopping Mike Word in five rounds. But more attention was focused on the action taking place outside of the ring, where such boxing luminaries as former heavyweight champions Lennox Lewis, Evander Holyfield, George Foreman, and Mike Tyson, as well as TV broadcasters Jim Lampley and Bob Costas, mingled with the fans in attendance.

"We need this place to stay open, we need it because these recreation centers are very important to city kids," Steward said. "I came out of the rec programs and I don't know where I'd be without them. What I like is the outpouring we're getting from people in Detroit and people throughout the country. It's been just tremendous."

Funding to maintain the Kronk, which comes from the Detroit Recreation Department, was severely slashed, and Charles Beckham, the Detroit Recreation Department director, told Steward in January that the Kronk needed $500,000 to remain open, although $150,000 would enable the gym to survive. Steward is hoping an auction of boxing memorabilia, including the gloves worn by Lennox Lewis when he knocked out Mike Tyson and Hasim Rahman, could generate the cash to keep the facility and all its rustic amenities running for at least the next two years.

"We have a commitment to this place and an obligation to these kids to keep this place open," Steward said. "We're getting there. We're getting donations in the mail from all over the country."

Anyone interested in sending donations to the Kronk can mail them to: The Emanuel Steward Foundation, 19244 Bretton Drive, Detroit, MI, 48223.

—Joe Santoliquito

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Steward preps Holyfield for a Kronk workout

Phoenix Facelift

Ever since it was remodeled to the tune of approximately $500,000 a few years ago, the Central Boxing Club in Phoenix, Arizona, has been recognized as one of the finest training facilities in the country. Boxers from all over the world have traveled to 1755 W. Van Buren Street to get in fighting shape at the Central, including such future Hall of Famers as Mike Tyson and Julio Cesar Chavez.

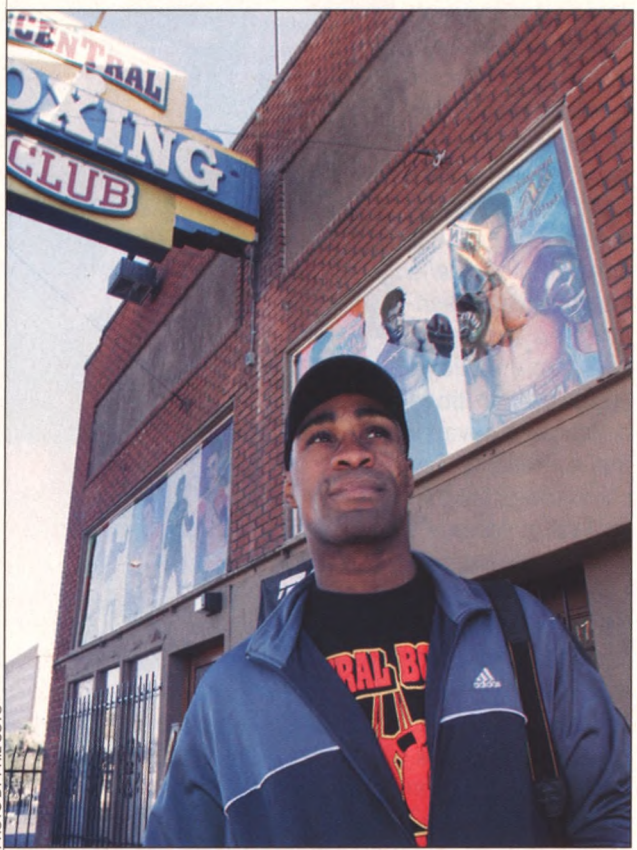


PHOTO BY PHIL SOTO

Hamilton outside the Central Boxing Club

Although the inside of the gym is clean, spacious, and atmospheric, with the exception for the colorful sign, the outside of the 5,000-square-foot building was kind of drab. But all that has changed thanks to a brainstorm by gym manager Harwood Hamilton.

"I was inspired by an issue of THE RING that listed the 80 best fighters of the last 80 years," said Hamilton. "I thought it would be a good idea for us to also honor some of the greats fighters, especially those from Arizona."

To that end, two artists were commissioned to paint a series of 12 portraits. The work, which took approximately six months to complete and install, was recently unveiled to the delight of the local boxing community, including 2006 International Boxing Hall of Fame inductee Michael Carbajal, who was on hand for ceremony. But the beatification project still isn't finished.

"We still have a lot of work to do," said Hamilton. "The portraits are around 5 by 3 feet, but we have one whole wall, 120 feet long and 25 feet high, that will eventually have a huge mural dedicated to legendary Arizona boxers from the past, including guys like Zora Folley, Nico Perez, and Louie Espionoza."

Readers can be sure that when the mural is finished, we will run a photo of it. After all, THE RING was responsible for planting the seed from which such a splendid project grew.

—Nigel Collins

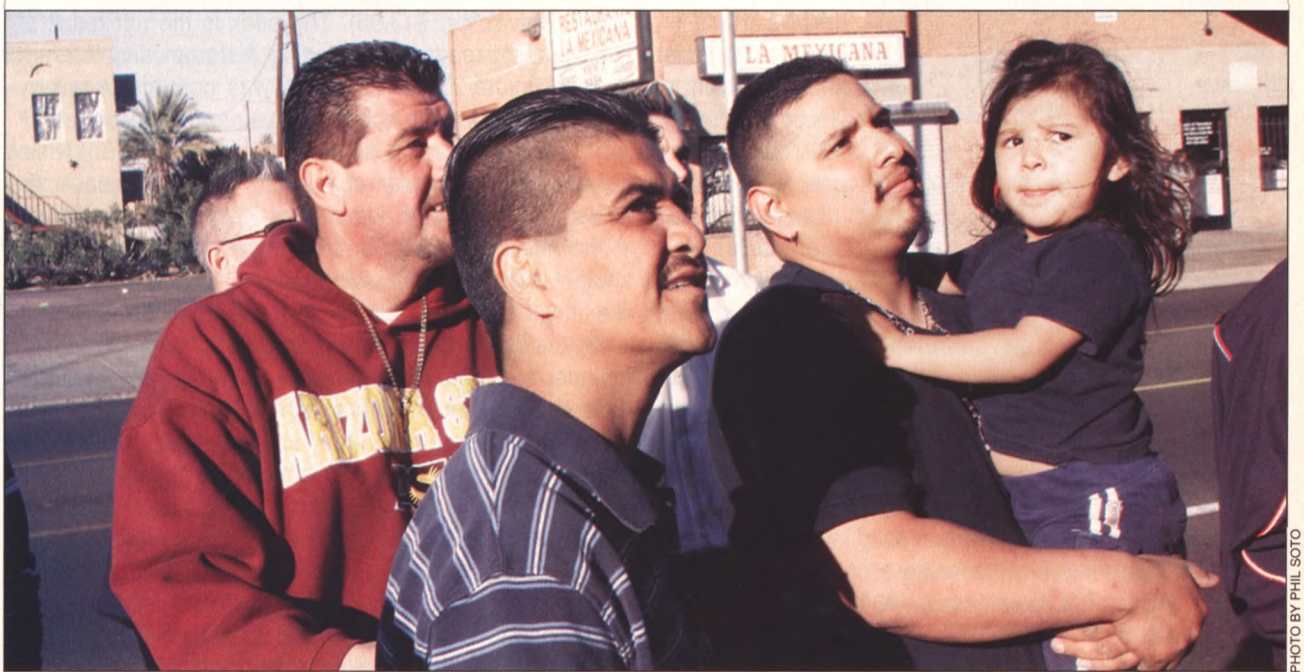


PHOTO BY PHIL SOTO

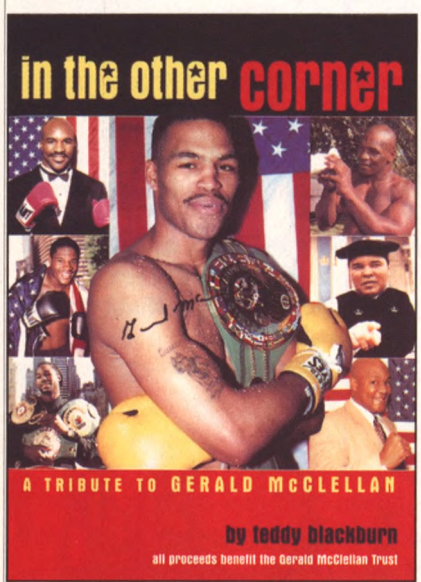
Carbajal and friends admire his portrait at the unveiling

Boxing Bookshelf

Every now and then, something happens that restores your faith in the goodness of mankind, and *In The Other Corner: A Tribute To Gerald McClellan* by Teddy Blackburn is proof positive that human decency still exists—even in an enterprise as permeated with greed and self-interest as professional boxing.

Fight photographer Blackburn had been a friend and admirer of McClellan for years before the fighter was gravely injured in his 1995 fight with Nigel Benn. But it was afterward, when McClellan became wheelchair bound and required around-the-clock care, that Blackburn showed what a true friendship is all about. He refused to allow the fighter to be forgotten, and when the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Blackburn in 2002 for his efforts on McClellan's behalf, the photographer made sure that the former WBC middleweight titleholder was at his side when he accepted the award.

But Blackburn continued to search for ways to help McClellan, and in late-2005 he published *In The Other Corner*, with all the proceeds going to the Gerald McClellan Trust.

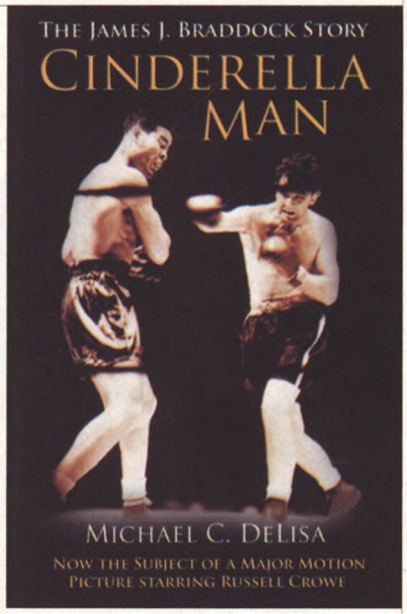


Although Blackburn was the driving force behind the project, he received financial support from promoter Lou DiBella and editorial assistance from journalist Steve Farhood, as well as the cooperation of the McClellan family.

While there is some text, the book is basically a collection of Blackburn's boxing photography. Naturally, there are plenty of images of McClellan, both before and after his ill-fated fight with Benn, but it doesn't stop there. Practically every well-known fighter, from Muhammad Ali to Mike Tyson, as well as many less-famous boxers and various fight people, are included. But it is Blackburn's eye for the unusual that makes his work something special: Paul Spadafora at Billy Conn's grave, James Toney in a bathtub smoking a cigar, and Peter McNeely cavorting in a pool with a couple of Vegas babes come immediately to mind.

Those interested in purchasing a copy can do so by sending $50 to: T.B. Enterprises, 2985 Botanical Square, #6-E, Bronx, New York, 10458. Checks should be made out to: Fighters Need A Hand, *not* to Blackburn.

—Nigel Collins



Given his modest disposition, it would have been interesting to know what James J. Braddock would have thought of the media's recent fascination with his extraordinary life and ring career. Since last summer's theatrical release of the biopic *Cinderella Man* enshrined Braddock as a part of American mythology, no fewer than three biographies have hit the bookshelves chronicling the Depression-era fighter's ascent to the heavyweight throne amid uncompromising poverty outside the ring and prohibitive odds within it.

Those who have seen Hollywood director Ron Howard's dignified treatment of Braddock on the silver screen are now familiar with most of the details of the fighter's inspiring saga. But here is something you probably didn't know: Braddock actually disliked being referred to as the Cinderella Man—a label affixed to him by legendary writer Damon Runyon after his shocking upset of Max Baer in 1935. That and many other fascinating little insights can be found buried in the pages of *Cinderella Man: The James J. Braddock Story* (Milo Books, 269 pages, soft cover, $13.95). The book is the net result of two years of research by boxing historian and Internet scribe Michael C. DeLisa, who was commissioned by Howard's production company to unearth the details of Braddock's life story in preparation for the film. But while Howard's film exercises certain storytelling license—particularly in its absurd portrayal of Baer as a one-dimensional villain—DeLisa's biography gives an honest, straight-ahead account of Braddock's story with workmanlike integrity that would make his subject proud.

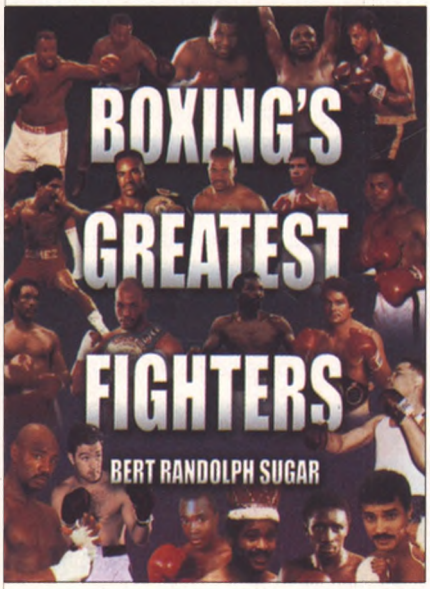
DeLisa's prose is highly readable, serving to fuse together some outstanding research not just on Braddock himself, but on an era of prizefighting poured over by plenty of writers before him. Many inexperienced young men, desperate to earn a living, sought boxing as a quick avenue to wealth during the Depression, and DeLisa provides a lurid picture of the excessive and frequently brutal exploitation that occurred. Others will find details of backdoor negotiations leading up to Braddock's fight with Joe Louis engrossing. (Braddock and his fast-talking manager, Joe Gould, negotiated a clandestine deal with Louis' promoter, Mike Jacobs, that would entitle them 10 percent of

Louis' net promotional earnings over 10 years in exchange for granting "The Brown Bomber" a shot at the title).

Whatever your interest as a boxing fan, DeLisa's book is a worthwhile and unvarnished read. As for those who may like their history painted with a thin veneer of make-believe, stick with Russell Crowe and buy the *Cinderella Man* DVD.

—Paul Salgado

Boxing writers are compulsive list-makers. Bert Randolph Sugar's latest book, *Boxing's Greatest Fighters* (Lyons Press, paperback, $16.95), attempts to rank the top 100 fighters in history. It's an updated version of an earlier book, with eight of the original 100 dropped to make room for more recent names. You might be surprised to see Julio Cesar Chavez rated so high on the list, and you might disagree with Sugar's ousting of Young Griffo, but the book is fun. If your only exposure to Sugar has been his recent appearances on ESPN Classic, you'll enjoy reading the biographical sketches of each fighter written in Sugar's inimitable style. He's one of the few writers who can pull off sarcasm and nostalgia in the same paragraph.



The book can be used as either a topic of discussion (was Pep really better than Whitaker?) or enjoyed as a good read. Many of these chapters were published by Sugar back in his days as the editor of THE RING and *Boxing Illustrated*, but it's nice to have so much of his writing collected in one volume. A few more pictures might have been nice, but that's a quibble. And yes, if you're wondering, Mike Tyson not only made the list, but his placement may give you a chuckle.

Since Sugar seemingly writes 147 books per year, we'd like to make a request. Forty years of rubbing elbows with the great-and-not-so-great must have resulted in some interesting anecdotes. So how about setting them down on paper, Bert?

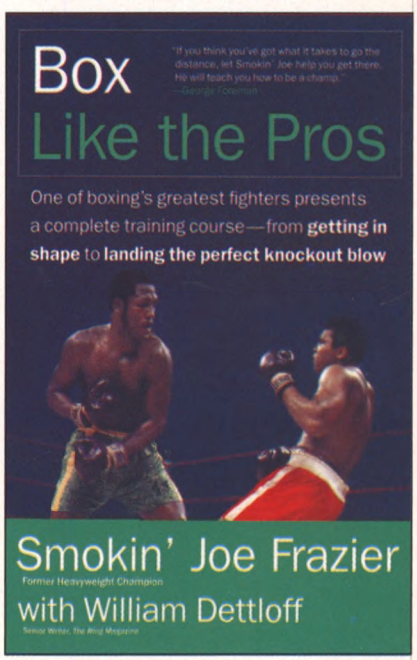
—Don Stradley

A man can change a lot in 10 years. Take Joe Frazier, for instance. In his 1996 autobiography, the former heavyweight champion of the world was more smoulderin' than smokin', still smarting over his treatment by the man with whom he will forever be linked in history, still calling Muhammad Ali "Cassius Clay," and wishing he could "beat him up piece by piece and mail him back to Jesus."

But in *Box Like The Pros* (Collins, 216 pages, softcover, $15.95), the new training primer authored by Frazier with William Dettloff, senior writer for THE RING, a mellowed-out Joe is downright respectful toward his most famous adversary, calling Ali "The Butterfly" and even acknowledging him as "the star of (the 1960s)." That's just one of the pleasant surprises in this handy, thorough, and easily understood textbook for anyone interested in just having one fight or making a career out of the ring.

Before getting into the do's and don'ts of training and boxing, readers are taken on a tour of the fight game from the John L. Sullivan era to the present. It's not just a history lesson. Frazier's point is that boxing has overcome plenty in the last century-plus, and will continue to do so. "It'll have its ups and downs, like we all do," he says. "But it'll survive."

So will the people who heed the advice that follows on everything from how to pick a boxing gym (the best ones, says Joe, are "old, a little run down, and messy, and they smell like people do hard work there"), what exercises to do and equipment to use, how to throw a punch, and why it's better to run in construction boots than Adidas. The book is illustrated throughout with pictures taken at Frazier's Gym in Philadelphia, and in an appendix is a state-by-state listing of boxing gyms, complete with addresses and phone numbers.



It's a top-notch tutorial full of sound information. I wish I'd had it when I entered the 1967 Wisconsin Golden Gloves tournament. It might not have spared me the humiliation that ensued, but I might have done more against the scamboogah in the other corner than cringe and pray. Thanks to Joe's book, now I even feel better about that. "You were a fighter for a night," he writes at the end to guys like me. "That's a lot more than most people can say."

Quite frankly, any book that can make me hold my head up high about that is Pulitzer material.

—Pete Ehrmann

TV Fights of the Month

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
1/27/05	Virgil Hill W 12 Valery Brudov	PPV	c	C	B-	C
Apparently Hill can still do most of the things he did when he was 30; problem is we didn't like it then, either						
1/27/05	Stevie Johnston W 12 Steve Quinonez	PPV	jw	C+	B	C+
Wouldn't you love to see Johnston against, say, Miguel Cotto?						
1/27/05	Mike Arnaoutis KO 1 Marc Thompson	PPV	jw	C+	C+	C
Yes, Thompson was undefeated, and no, that doesn't mean anything; time for Arnaoutis to step up						
1/27/05	Vicente Escobedo KO 6 Jesus Perez	ESPN2	l	C	C+	C+
This is the kind of fight every kid needs on the way up; good for Escobedo for taking it and winning it						
1/27/05	Rock Allen KO 1 Mike Walker	ESPN2	w	C	D+	D+
Where would our sport be without midwestern white guys who can't fight?						
1/27/06	Kassim Ouma KO 8 Francisco Mora	ESPN2	jm	A-	C-	C+
Typically solid Ouma performance; how's that rematch with Karmazin coming?						
1/27/05	Marco Antonio Rubio KO 8 Alsanbek Kodzoev	Telefutura	jm	C+	B	C+
We would have liked to see this one go a little further, but good outing for Rubio either way						
1/28/05	Arturo Gatti KO 10 Thomas Damgaard	HBO	w	A	C+	C+
Gatti bleeds from a strong wind and after almost 10 rounds with Damgaard he was unmarked; what does that tell you?						
2/3/06	James McGirt KO 3 Chris Overby	ESPN2	w	C	D-	D
That there are six guys Overby has beaten is the scary part						
2/3/06	Mary Jo Sanders KO 3 Iva Weston	ESPN2	w	C+	C-	C
Sanders one of the better female bodypunchers around; this was impressive						
2/3/06	Koba Gogoladze W 12 Antonio Davis	ESPN2	l	C+	A	D
Gogoladze officially replaces Ian Gardner as the game's most annoying guy to fight						
2/3/06	Andre Berto KO 3 Jonathan Tubbs	Showtime	w	C	A-	C+
Berto all puncher; this was over after the first right hand landed						
2/3/06	Sechew Powell W 10 Robert Frazier	Showtime	jm	C+	B+	D+
Powell picks the one junior middleweight who's less exciting to watch than he is; good step up for him, though						
2/3/06	Jose Armando Santz Cruz W 12 Edner Cherry	Showtime	l	C+	B+	B+
It took a while, but once this got going it was excellent; good for both guys						
2/4/05	Jose Luis Castillo W 12 Rolando Reyes	Showtime	jw	A	C-	D
Don't be too hard on Castillo; every fight can't be a war						
2/10/06	Cesar Bazan W 10 Marteze Logan	Telefutura	jw	C+	C+	C-
The decision could have gone Marteze's way, but knowing how to fight should count for something, right?						
2/10/06	Emanuel Augustus KO 10 Jaime Rangal	ESPN2	jw	C	B+	B+
Okay, who else wants ESPN2 to televise every fight Augustus has until he retires?						
2/10/06	Paul Malagnaggi W 10 Donald Camarena	ESPN2	jw	C	B+	C-
Paul, Olivia Newton-John called; she wants her headband back						
2/13/06	Mohammad Said W 4 Jonathan Reid	ESPN2	m	C-	B	D
That Reid once fought for an alphabet title tells you all you need to know about the alphabets						
2/13/06	Miguel Espino W 6 Dorian Beaupierre	ESPN	m	C	B+	C+
Raise your hand if you don't remember Espino looking nearly that good during The Contender						
2/13/06	Peter Manfredo KO 3 Scott Pemberton	ESPN	sm	C+	B-	C+
Fighters don't come more shot than Pemberton appears to be, but Manfredo did everything right just the same						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

Jack Fiske, 1917-2006

Muhammad Ali, the greatest heavyweight who ever lived, once paid Jack Fiske, the late boxing writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the ultimate compliment. Surrounded by a posse of TV and radio journalists after a successful defense of his title—and tired of their inane questions—he spotted Jack at the back of the room, notepad in hand, toothpick in the corner of his mouth. "Mr. Fiske, do you have a question?" he asked, after calling for silence. Ali knew a real reporter when he saw one.

Jack was the voice of boxing on the West Coast for over 40 years. Born on July 15, 1917, in New York City, he served as a medic in the Army Air Corps in Australia and New Guinea during World War II, then attended the University of Alabama, where he managed the school boxing team. George Wallace, the future state governor, whom he called "a fine boxer," was his bantamweight. After graduating, Jack worked on several newspapers before joining the *Chronicle* in 1950, where he established himself as the dean of America's boxing writers. In later years he wrote a column for THE RING.

"We spoke every week and I respected him enormously. He was such a great brain on boxing," reflected Hall of Fame trainer Angelo Dundee. "We didn't always agree, but he was a hell of an analyst."

How "the *Chronicle* scored it" was one of the compelling elements of his fight reports. His notes were always contained on a single piece of paper. But it was his twice-weekly column for which he was renowned. "People looked eagerly to his columns, for he could pack more information into his column than most writers could in a whole page," recalled boxing historian Hank Kaplan. He got the scoops because he knew what real reporting was all about.

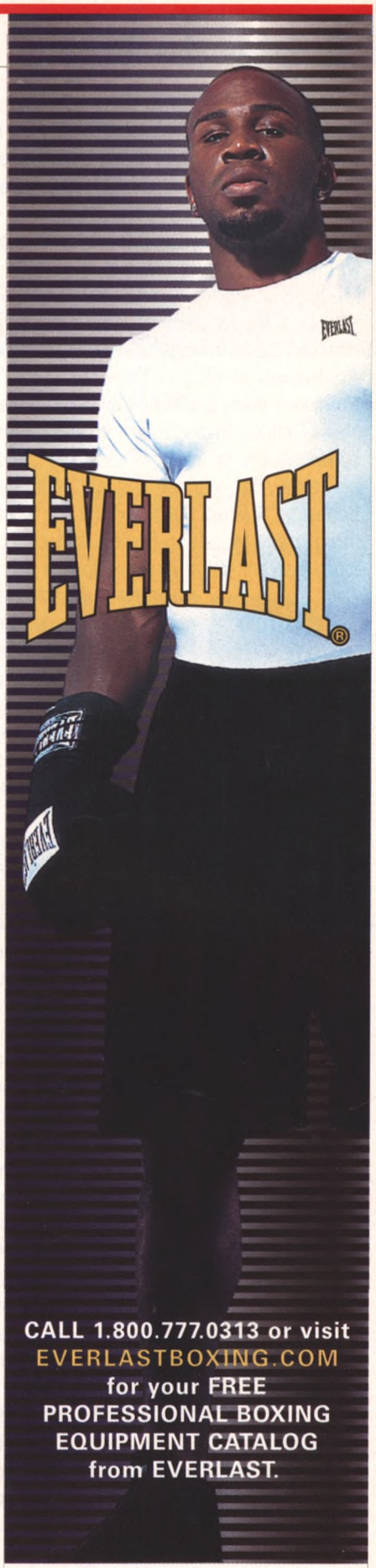
Fiske's home was a museum, containing paintings, programs, gloves, and other memorabilia he collected over a lifetime of covering the big fights. "He was exceptionally knowledgeable about boxing," said promoter Bob Arum. "Even while he was interviewing you, you learnt more from him than he would from you."

More than anything else, however, people who knew him will remember his warmth, generosity, and acerbic wit. "I've vacationed in Great Britain 16 times," he wrote. "I love the people, the ambience, the architecture, the history, the tradition, the Underground, the landmarks, the churches, and the quiet of the countryside. Only the British boxers turn me off. They suck."

Fiske was elected into the Hall of Fame in 2003, and died on January 24, 2006, at Kaiser Redwood City Medical Center after a long battle with Parkinson's. He was 88.

—Brian Doogan

Fiske at ringside



Outside the Ropes

It looks like **Fernando Vargas** already has a leg up on his post-boxing career after making his movie debut in *Alpha Dog*, which got good reviews at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. The film, written and directed by Nick Cassevetes, is based on the true life of Jesse James Hollywood, a drug dealer who became one of the youngest men ever to be on the FBI's most wanted list. Vargas plays a character called Tiko "TKO" Martinez ... Former junior welterweight champion **Kostya Tszyu** is also branching out. He's following in **Evander Holyfield**'s footsteps, and will appear as a contestant in Australia's version of *Dancing With The Stars* ... WBC President **Jose Sulaiman** was overjoyed when his niece, Nellie Catalina Esper Sulaiman, was released after being held by kidnappers for 20 months. "Nellie, the only daughter of my only sister, has returned safe and well," said Sulaiman in mid-February. "I would like to extend my most profound gratitude to so many friends in boxing that called and extended so many prayers to the Almighty for her safe return during such tragedy and sadness" ... Becoming a superstar boxer can be a mixed blessing, as **Manny Pacquiao** has discovered. Shortly after knocking out **Erik Morales** in their January 21 rematch, Pac-Man signed a deal with San Miguel Corp., Southeast Asia's biggest food and beverage company. As part of the new endorsement deal, Pacquiao will tour the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific region to promote San Miguel. The company will also sponsor Pac-Man's personal business ventures, including concerts, movies, and other activities as a singer, actor, and performer. San Miguel will also provide Pacquiao with life insurance and produce boxing clinic videos to promote the sport. That's the good news. The flipside is that while Pacquiao was training in California for the second Morales fight, the Filipino media was filled with stories about his relationship with **Joanna Rose Bacosa**, a 24-year-old native of Palawan province. The relationship resulted in the birth of a boy, who is now two years old. Bacosa said she met Pacquiao in February '03 at Pan Pacific Hotel in Manila, where she worked. Bacosa is currently pursuing a complaint against Pacquiao, seeking support for the boy. Despite the controversy, Pacquiao said he still has the support of his wife, Jinky, who apparently knew of the affair before it became public knowledge ... WBA heavyweight titleholder **Nikolay Valuaev** has also experienced the bitter-sweet side of fame. While he's currently one of the most talked-about heavyweights in the world due to his improbable size, the undefeated Germany-based Russian could also be scheduled for several court appearances. Back home in St. Petersburg after lifting the belt from **John Ruiz**, "The Beast From The East" faces possible criminal charges for allegedly beating a 61-year-old security guard. According to his accuser, **Yury Sergeyev**, Valuev began beating him over the head and continued beating him after he fell to the ground. Apparently, the incident was sparked when Sergeyev told Valuev's wife to move her car, which was parked illegally outside of the Spartak Ice Palace. "He insulted my wife, and then I grabbed him by the collar to bring him to his senses," Valuev was quoted as saying in a German newspaper. "But I did not hit this man." St. Petersburg police said that they were investigating Sergeyev's claim. Meanwhile, Valuev could be headed for a court battle with New Jersey entrepreneur **Joe O'Donnell**, who insists he holds promotional rights to Valuev in the United States. O'Donnell, who reportedly invested $200,000 in Valuev in 2001, already has a court ruling in his favor. He sought redress in federal court in Camden, New Jersey, where the judge ruled that O'Donnell owned promotional rights to Valuev everywhere in the world except Russia. O'Donnell is also seeking a portion of the promotional monies from the 14 bouts Valuev has had outside of Russia since June 2001, when the seven-footer stopped **George Linberger** in Atlantic City, which was the only bout Valuev had under O'Donnell's aegis. The situation is complicated by the fact that **Don King** obtained a 50 percent promotional interest in Valuev following the Ruiz fight and would like to bring him to the U.S. to fight ... Former WBC heavyweight titleholder **Oliver McCall** was sentenced to 30 days in Nashville, Tennessee's Metro Jail after pleading guilty to litany of offenses, including assaulting a police officer, resisting arrest, criminal trespass, possession of crack cocaine, and being a fugitive from justice ... Writer/publicist **Robert Sadler**, 69, died of lung cancer at his home in the East Falls section of Philadelphia. He wrote a weekly boxing column for the *Philadelphia New Observer* for 10 years and did public relations work for local boxers, including former WBA cruiserweight titleholder **Nate Miller**. ■

Pacquiao: Mixed blessings

Valuev: Headed to court

McCall: Busted again

Quotable

"I'm not worried about my injuries by any means. I have the best doctors in the world and they said my injury was as minor as a head injury gets."

—Undefeated heavyweight Joe Mesi, commenting on his pending return to the ring after two years on medical suspension due to a brain bleed, suffered in his March 2004 bout with Vassiliy Jirov

"To be a professional fighter, at the highest level, you need to be totally selfish. That's the only way you can make it."

—Ray Leonard, reflecting on his Hall of Fame career during an interview published in ***Boxing Monthly***

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended February 16, 2006

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: No changes.
Light heavyweights: No changes.
Super middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: No changes.
Junior middleweights: No changes.
Welterweights: Arturo Gatti moves up from junior welterweight and enters the 147-pound ratings at six, based on his 11th-round stoppage of Thomas Damgaard. Damgaard (sixth last issue) slips to 10th and David Estrada (10th last issue) exits.
Junior welterweights: Now that Gatti (seventh last issue) has moved to 147 pounds, everybody rated eighth and below last issue moves up one slot. Steve Johnston debuts at number 10.
Junior lightweights: No changes.
Featherweights: Takashi Koshimoto crashes the ratings, vaulting to number two on the strength of an upset decision over Injin Chi, who drops from second to fourth. Koshimoto's inclusion pushes down everyone rated three or below last issue one rung each. Hiroyuki Enoki (10th last issue) exits.
Junior featherweights: No changes.
Bantamweights: No changes.
Junior bantamweights: No changes.
Flyweights: No changes.
Junior flyweights: No changes.
Strawweights: No changes.
Pound-for-pound: Manny Pacquiao's knockout of Erik Morales—coupled with a previous victory over Marco Antonio Barrera—enables the Filipino to leapfrog from fifth to third, behind Floyd Mayweather and Winky Wright. The switch knocks Barrera and Ricky Hatton down one place each. Morales (sixth last issue) exits due to losing his last two fights. Morales' departure allows everyone rated seventh and below last issue to move up one place. Flyweight Pongsaklek Wonjongkam enters at number 10.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Gatti stops Damgaard to enter welter ranks

The RING
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Junior Welterweight
2. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
3. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
6. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Featherweight
7. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
8. **Jose Luis Castillo**
   Junior Welterweight
9. **Antonio Tarver**
   Light Heavyweight
10. **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam**
    Flyweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended February 16, 2006

PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Takashi Koshimoto debuts at number-two at featherweight, after his surprising upset of Injin Chi

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 39-2-1 (20)
2. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 41-5-1 (33)
3. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-4-2 (43)
4. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-2 (29)
5. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-6-1 (28)
6. **MONTE BARRETT** Queens, NY 31-4 (17)
7. **CALVIN BROCK** Charlotte, NC 27-0 (21)
8. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 45-3 (40)
9. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 25-1 (21)
10. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 43-0 (31)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 34-1-1 (21)
2. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 23-2-1 (15)
3. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK** Germany 31-0 (21)
4. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 26-2 (22)
5. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-2-1 (31)
6. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 29-3-1 (20
7. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 38-10-1 (20)
8. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO** Spain 60-6 (40)
9. **RODNEY JONES** Lafayette, LA 36-3-1 (22)
10. **ALEJANDRO GARCIA** Mexico 25-1 (24)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 44-2-1 (33)
2. **TAKASHI KOSHIMOTO** Japan 39-1-2 (17)
3. **HUMBERTO SOTO** Mexico 38-5-2 (22)
4. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 30-3-1 (18)
5. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 26-1 (19)
6. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 25-2-2 (14)
7. **VICTOR POLO** Colombia 36-5-3 (26)
8. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 36-0-1 (20)
9. **JOAN GUZMAN** Dominican Republic 24-0 (17)
10. **SPEND ABAZI** Denmark 32-1 (10)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 39-3 (29)

1. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR** France 28-2-2 (19)
2. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 56-4-1 (36)
3. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 24-2 (17)
4. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGYM** Thailand 24-0 (15)
5. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 27-1 (18)
6. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG** Thailand 43-2-1 (18)
7. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 23-0 (14)
8. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 22-0-1 (5)
9. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 22-0 (8)
10. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 27-1 (25)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 35-3 (31)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 19-2 (6)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 50-2-2 (35)
4. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 31-4 (27)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 18-1 (15)
6. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 34-4 (20)
7. **CRUZ CARVAJAL** Mexico 25-13-1 (21)
8. **RICARDO VARGAS** Mexico 39-11-3 (13)
9. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 65-9 (42)
10. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 18-0 (6)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: O'NEIL BELL
Atlanta, GA 26-1-1 (24)

1. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 33-3-2 (26)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 19-0 (10)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 31-3 (21)
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
England 45-12-2 (29)
5. **CARL THOMPSON**
England 34-6 (25)
6. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-2 (17)
7. **DALE BROWN**
Canada 35-4-1 (22)
8. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 34-2 (16)
9. **DAVID HAYE**
England 15-1 (15)
10. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 34-1 (26)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ANTONIO TARVER
Orlando, FL 24-3 (18)

1. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 43-10-2 (29)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 23-0 (14)
3. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-4 (38)
4. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 38-3-1 (23)
5. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
France 47-2 (31)
6. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 30-0 (21)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 39-3 (23)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 24-2 (18)
9. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 25-2 (13)
10. **ERIC HARDING**
West Hartford, CT 23-3-1 (7)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
Wales 40-0 (31)
2. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 37-0 (28)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 21-0 (17)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-2 (13)
5. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 25-3 (20)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 21-2 (19)
7. **MANNY SIACA**
Puerto Rico 20-5 (18)
8. **OTIS GRANT**
Canada 38-2-1 (17)
9. **ROBIN REID**
England 38-5-1 (27)
10. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 22-0 (16)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 25-0 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 50-3 (25)
2. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 46-4-1 (32)
3. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 19-0 (17)
4. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 24-1 (11)
5. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
England 40-3 (35)
6. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 31-8 (12)
7. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 20-1 (8)
8. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-2 (13)
9. **SCOTT DANN**
England 24-2 (17)
10. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 27-0 (24)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: CARLOS BALDOMIR
Argentina 42-9-6 (12)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 32-4 (23)
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-3 (25)
3. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 34-3 (11)
4. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 41-4 (35)
5. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 26-1 (12)
6. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 40-7 (31)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 25-1 (23)
8. **JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA**
Worcester, MA 37-4-1(24)
9. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 36-3 (11)
10. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
Denmark 37-1 (27)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 40-0 (30)

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 35-0 (24)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 25-0 (21)
3. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
Australia 31-2 (25)
4. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 54-7-1 (47)
5. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 33-1-2 (19)
6. **CARLOS MAUSSA**
Colombia 19-3 (16)
7. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 26-2-1 (17)
8. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 31-4-1 (17)
9. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 40-8-1 (26)
10. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
Vero Beach, FL 38-3-1 (17)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: DIEGO CORRALES
Las Vegas, NV 40-3 (33)

1. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 31-3-1 (19)
2. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 35-3-1 (27)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 28-0 (14)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 32-3 (24)
5. **ACELINO FREITAS**
Brazil 37-1 (32)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-1 (16)
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-3 (29)
8. **ISAAC HLATSHWAYO**
South Africa 22-0 (9)
9. **LAVKA SIM**
Mongolia 21-4-1 (18)
10. **RICKY QUILES**
Puerto Rico 38-6-3 (8)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 41-3-2 (32)
2. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 61-4 (42)
3. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-4 (34)
4. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 23-1-1 (12)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 45-3-1 (36)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 45-2-1 (32)
7. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
Bellflower, CA 41-6-1 (24)
8. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 21-1 (17)
9. **ROBBIE PEDEN**
Australia 25-3 (14)
10. **JANOS NAGY**
Hungary 23-0 (14)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 30-1 (16)
2. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 31-3-1 (8)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 23-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 32-1-1 (24)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-2 (26)
6. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 29-4 (19)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 23-1 (10)
8. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
South Africa 27-3 (18)
9. **GERRY PENALOSA**
Philippines 49-5-2 (33)
10. **MBWANA MATUMLA**
Tanzania 15-1 (9)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 60-2 (31)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 27-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 24-0 (19)
4. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 43-3-1 (33)
5. **IRENE PACHECO**
Colombia 30-1 (23)
6. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 19-0-2 (13)
7. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
Nicaragua 37-2-2 (24)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 19-1 (7)
9. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 24-3-1 (10)
10. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 38-14-3 (22)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 21-1 (17)
2. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 22-3-1 (16)
3. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 22-2-2 (13)
4. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 20-1 (15)
5. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 18-0 (12)
6. **WILL GRIGSBY**
St. Paul, MN 18-4-1 (11)
7. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 33-4-1 (20)
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
Colombia 35-4 (21)
9. **NABUAKI MASUDA**
Japan 21-3 (3)
10. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 22-5 (12)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIDA**
Japan 19-1-3 (8)
2. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 50-7-4 (22)
3. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 24-0 (5)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 15-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 15-2 (7)
6. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-7-3 (13)
7. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 19-3-1 (16)
8. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 14-2-1 (10)
9. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 35-4-1 (30)
10. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 22-0 (17)

By Jeff Ryan

You Can Call Me, Al

One of my favorite things about Showtime Championship Boxing is the "Ask Al" segment, during which analyst Al Bernstein answers questions e-mailed to him by the viewers. Bernstein, one of the game's more entertaining color men and a true expert on the Sweet Science, just loves to have his brain probed. In fact, Showtime's Web site boasts, "Remember, Bernstein has been in the business for 25 years, so no question is ... well ... out of the question. Rules, questions, opinion, history ... Fire away!"

Sure, with pleasure. Hey, Al, answer me this ...

•Are those of us who really like and want the best for Arturo Gatti supposed to hope that he eventually beats Carlos Baldomir for the WBC welterweight title, knowing full well that means subsequent title defenses and more punishment endured? Or are we supposed to hope that Gatti is so thoroughly embarrassed by Baldomir that "Thunder" retires while he's still able to walk and talk normally?

•In light of Zab Judah's inexcusable loss to Baldomir, what's so great about a Judah-Floyd Mayweather matchup that a) it brings bitter rivals Don King and Bob Arum together, and b) it gets the promoters to completely ignore the little matter of Judah being damaged goods? For that matter, weren't you surprised that Erik Morales-Manny Pacquiao II went on despite "El Terrible's" terrible performance against Zahir Raheem four months earlier?

•And how could THE RING leave Morales in its pound-for-pound top 10 after the Raheem debacle? Didn't you, too, think the only mulligan in boxing was Seamus Mulligan, the undefeated cruiserweight prospect from County Mayo?

•Is Morales really planning to go straight into a rubber match vs. Pacquaio in September without fighting a tuneup?

•How badly was John Ruiz screwed against Nicolay Valuev? Did you think you'd ever again see the day when *Ruiz* looked like the only guy in a fight who had a clue?

•Doesn't Valuev bear a frightening resemblance to hockey great Mark Messier? You're thinking, *Yeah, but Messier's the better fighter,* aren't you?

•Didn't Valuev and Thomas Damgaard, who fell to Gatti, show us that a combined record of 80-0 doesn't mean a damned thing?

•Is it really true that Rocky Balboa fights in the ring again in *Rocky VI*? How the hell old is the guy?! By comparison, George Foreman was practically a teenager the night he dethroned Michael Moorer. Doesn't Stallone realize this is an *Academy Award winner for Best Picture* that he's diluting? Can you imagine *The Deer Hunter VI, Chariots Of Fire VI,* or *Rain Man VI*?

PHOTO BY PR NEWSWIRE

If we were Messier, we'd give Ryan a high stick for this comparison!

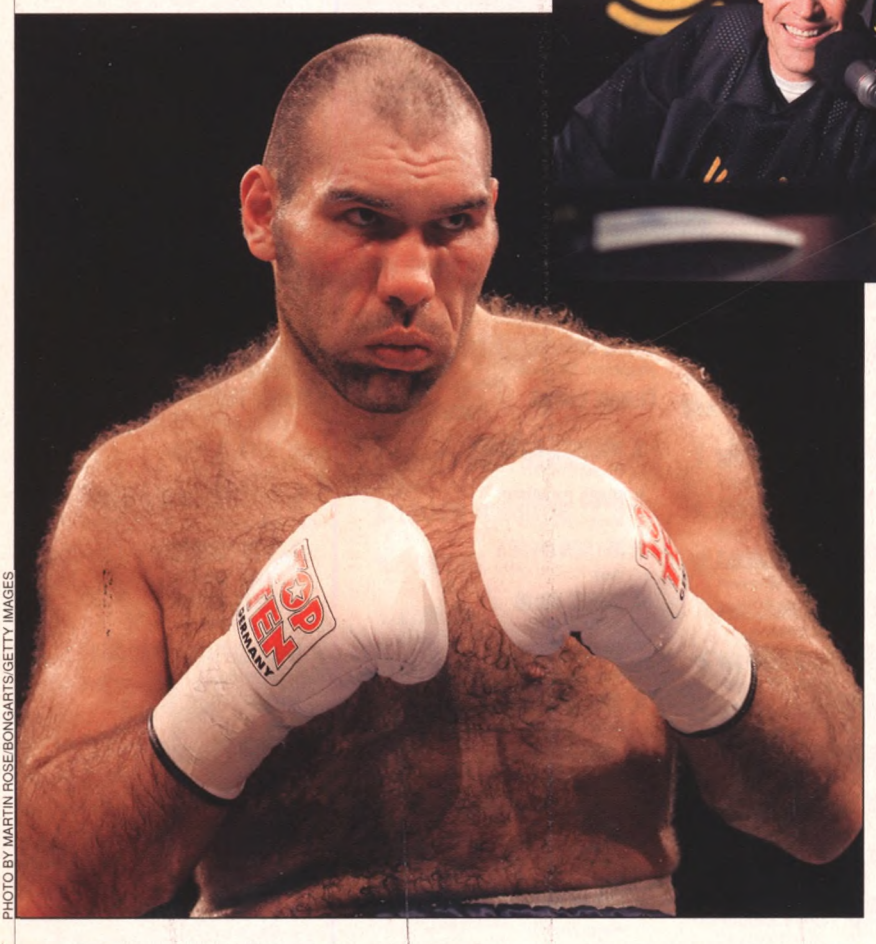


PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

•Judging by the amount of battles, in the arena and on the street, that the Rocky character has had since he was told in *Rocky II* that he had serious eye damage, shouldn't he be standing on a Philly street corner with a seeing-eye dog and a cup full of pencils by now?

•The Shane Mosley-Fernando Vargas showdown should have been billed, "Maybe One Of These Guys Finally Wins The Big One," don't you think?

•Remember that scene in *Raging Bull* when Jake LaMotta is lamenting the fact that his size will forever preclude him from fighting Joe Louis? Don't you get the same feeling of frustration when you realize Pacquiao vs. Ricky Hatton can never happen?

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Where did Quartey find the Fountain of Youth?

•Is Jermain Taylor making a big mistake if he meets Winky Wright in 2006 instead of 2007?

•Has the chronically underappreciated Wright ever received a better compliment than learning, as *The New York Post* reported, that rapper 50 Cent rented the coveted President's Club Room at the New York strip club, Scores, but then chose to spend the night watching a Wright fight on the tube?

•Is Hatton really going to fight Miguel Cotto in Madison Square Garden this year? Or is this more hype and b.s.?

•Was Paul Giamatti really *that* good in the role of trainer Joe Gould in *Cinderella Man*? Or was his nomination for Best Supporting Actor just an attempt to make up for ignoring his work in *Sideways* the year before?

•Would Russell Crowe have received a Best Actor nomination for playing James Braddock had the hotheaded actor not further trashed his reputation by throwing a telephone at a hotel clerk?

•When Silence Mabuza's mother used to yell, "Silence!" when he was growing up, how did he know if she was calling his name or just telling him to shut up?

•Where can we get a case or two of that rejuvenation juice that Ike Quartey's been drinking?

•Did you think Quartey would be the guy to discover the Fountain of Youth? Or were you betting on junior featherweight Daniel Ponce De Leon?

•When Thomas Hearns was in his prime, banking millions and having Emanuel Steward guiding his career, could you have ever envisioned him fighting at age 47?

•Hasn't women's boxing lost just about all of the momentum it spent years building?

•Didn't you always wonder how Pat Putnam, who died in November, was always able to know what went on behind those bolted dressing room doors when he was covering boxing for *Sports Illustrated*? Did he have X-ray vision? A spy in every single marquee fighter's entourage? Or just superb reporting skills?

•Now that he's free to apply for a license with any commission, heavyweight Joe Mesi isn't dumb enough to fight again. Is he? Didn't a bleeding brain scare him?

•Judging by some of the quotes uttered these days, wouldn't it be a good idea to drug test some fighters *before* their bouts?

•When IBF heavyweight titleholder Chris Byrd said of his defense against Wladimir Klitschko that a victory "would mean I'm the man, I truly belong," did Byrd get confused and think he was squaring off with *Vitali* Klitschko?

•Speaking of Vitali, is he really running for office in the Ukraine? Didn't he get to experience enough politics in boxing?

•This isn't the way Oscar De La Hoya's career was supposed to wind down, was it?

•When people ask you about the state of the heavyweight division, do you point out that Ruiz and James Toney, a fat, former middleweight, are in THE RING's top five?

•Were you good at math in school, Big Al? Can you believe that, as we went to press, the top three heavyweights in THE RING's ratings had a combined 11 losses and four draws while the top three super middles and junior welters had spotless records?

•Is that Steve Albert's real hair? ■

By Ivan Goldman

And The Trophy Goes To ... The Loser

If the Seattle Seahawks ran their schedule the way Bob Arum organizes his boxing cards, they'd have played Denver in the Super Bowl. After all, didn't the Broncos earn it when they lost the AFC playoff game to Pittsburgh?

As he gets up there in years, mega-promoter Arum increasingly confuses losers with winners. After Erik Morales got his butt kicked by Zahir Raheem, Arum reckoned this earned Morales another bout with Manny Pacquiao. Then when Zab Judah was chased all over the ring by Carlos Baldomir, Arum figured Judah must deserve the shot at THE RING's number-one pound-for pound fighter Floyd Mayweather.

These days the Arum formula is to stick losers into large-scale, pay-per-view attractions and spirit winners off to the land of lost laundry socks.

When I witness these never-ending boxing injustices, I sometimes regret not applying myself more and maybe landing a job as a figure-skating writer. After all, they actually get paid for watching classy young babes with pert, athletic butts zip around the ice in pretty costumes, while stirring music plays in the background.

And people in the figure-skating world seem so terribly well-mannered. Only occasionally do you run into Tonya Harding she-brutes and their club-swinging goons. Tonya, who once did a jail stretch for assaulting a boyfriend with a hubcap, was actually in the fight game awhile. But despite her nickname—"Bad Girl"—Tonya was only a medium-grade psychopath. It's people like Arum and Judah that make you sleep with one eye open.

Before he gets another big fight, back-turning, showboating, hyper-obnoxious, trash-mongering Judah needs to get paroled back to ESPN2 for re-education.

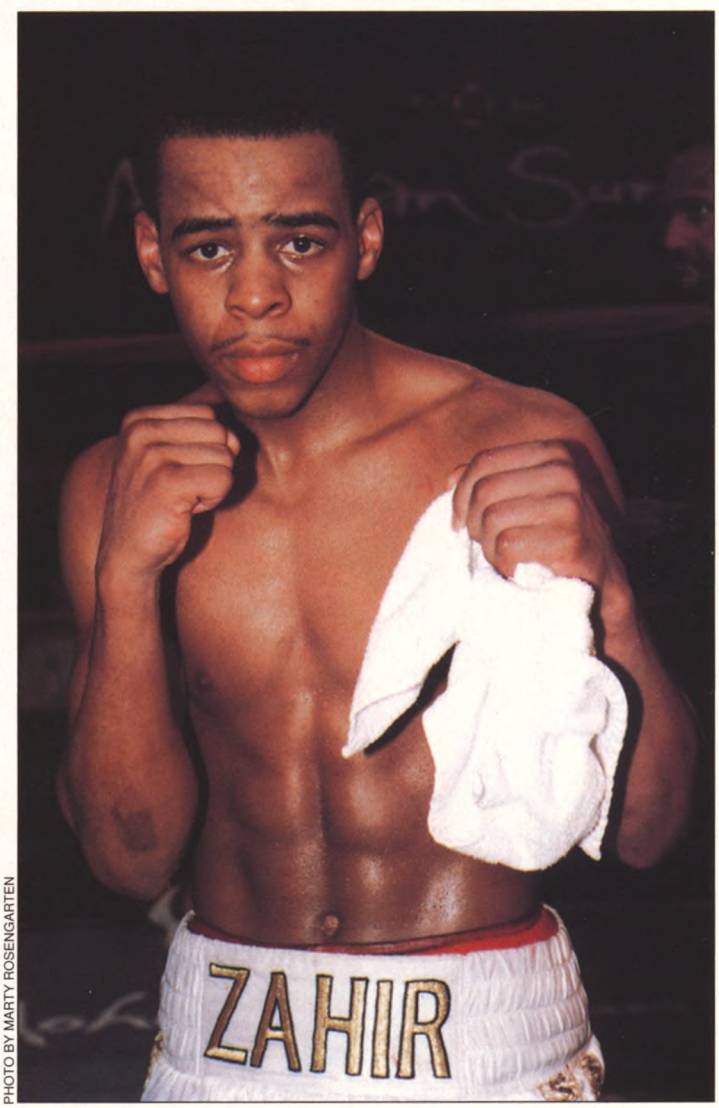


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Raheem got the shaft instead of a fight with Pacquiao

Surely Arum has heard of this other welterweight, Tijuana terror Antonio Margarito. Worthier by far, he would give Mayweather a good fight, might even beat him, has no fork in his tongue, and, by the way, is under contract to Arum. As are Mayweather, Raheem, and Morales. Evidently, it didn't take much convincing to get Mayweather more inclined to match his skills against quick-to-retreat-when-the-going-gets-rough Judah, as opposed to go-for-broke Margarito.

The smokescreen hiding all this reverse justice was so thick that I decided it could only be cleared by the cleverest Arum-basher of them all—his arch-rival and spiffier dresser Dan Goossen. Arum once put together a card on a specific date so he could plant a stink bomb under a previously scheduled Goossen show. Compared to Dan, I'm like the president of the Bob Arum Fan Club.

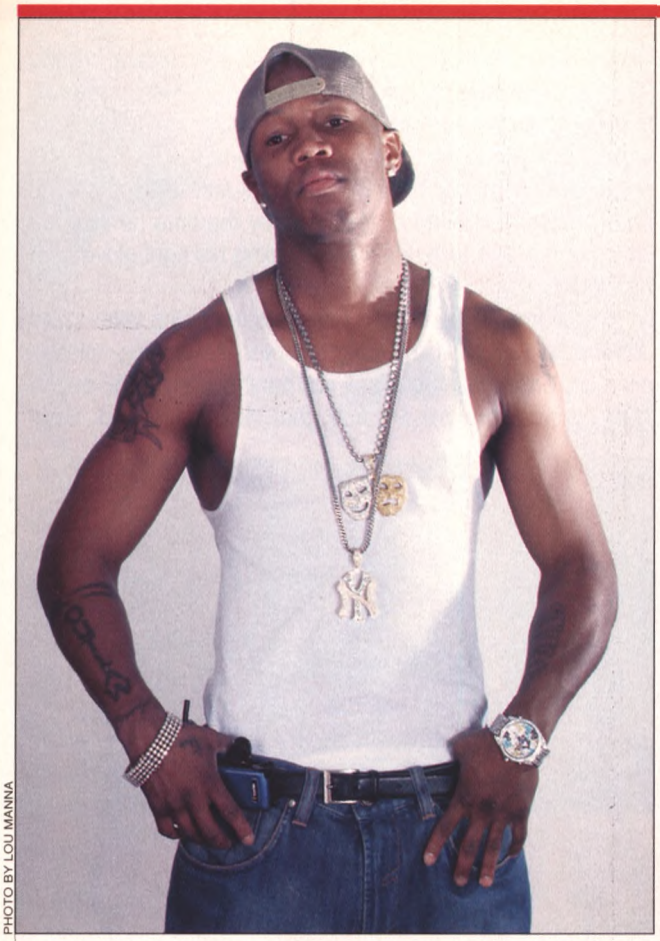


PHOTO BY LOU MANNA

Judah should be headed for ESPN2, not pay-per-view

But when I called Goossen, you'll never guess who came on the line—an unrecognizably kind, understanding Dan Goossen who bent himself into a pretzel to express empathy for Arum's position. "We all sat here and got kind of disgusted when Raheem beat Morales, and the fight with Pacquiao went to Morales," Goossen conceded. "The problem is that the fans bought it. It did 400,000 pay-per-view buys and made $2-million at the gate. And let's face it; it was a good fight."

As for Judah and Mayweather, he pointed out they "both have a following, are both very much vocal—that's the politest way to say it—and I believe all the trash-talking will raise the level of people's interest. As we found out with the Morales-Pacquiao fight, sometimes when people want to see something; they don't care if an actor had a bad movie last time out.

"Facts are facts. It was a travesty Raheem didn't get the chance to fight Pacquiao, but I've got to tell you, I don't think anyone would have been intrigued to see it. You can't argue with the fans. They spoke volumes on it."

Besides, Goossen concluded while mysteriously searching for even more excuses for Judah, it's hard for a world-class hotshot "to get up for a fight with a guy like Baldomir." Winky Wright, Goossen said, had the same problem when he looked not so terrific against Sam Soliman, though he did get a deserved though lackadaisical victory.

I agree with Dan that fans have excellent grounds to love all-action, never-quit sluggers like Morales and Arturo Gatti. Such fighters will always win respect and attract a following. But Judah is not one of those fighters. Margarito is.

What was going on with Goossen anyway? Why all these apologies for Arum's moves? Did someone slip him a Mickey? The most likely explanation struck me like a head of lettuce. As Dan and I said our goodbyes, I wished him success with whatever deal he was trying to put together with Arum. For Goossen to swallow his tongue that far down his throat, it must have been plenty lucrative.

Nada Advice: Yes, Pacquiao-Morales II was a heck of a fight. But it's also sad to see a battler like Morales, who's given us so many great moments, ultimately taken apart. Also, no matter how many times you see it, it's shocking when a fighter competing in a big, important contest loses his way, and his corner has no serious advice for him. Telling Morales to throw more punches and asking him how he felt was not terribly helpful. Only halfway through the first round, ace trainer Manny Steward told HBO viewers that Morales kept his right glove against the side of his face. That's where you put it to ward off left hooks from an orthodox fighter, not straight lefts from a southpaw. But Morales never adjusted and, as far as I could tell, was never advised of the error by his corner.

PHOTO BY CHRIS POLK/HBO

Hey, Bob, get this guy a big fight ASAP

It reminded me of Felix Trinidad against Winky Wright, when Trinidad circled to his right all night, setting him up for Winky's textbook straight left. Tito's cornermen, like Morales', seemed surprised Wright was a southpaw. Or perhaps they never noticed.

"Thunder's" Trouble: I have two major regrets about living on the West Coast. It has no New York City and no Gatti fights. No one was more delighted when icon Arturo underwent such a dynamic style makeover after pairing up with star trainer Buddy McGirt. It was beautiful to see "Thunder" stop leading with his face and take up boxing moves again. But when I watched Gatti against brave Dane Thomas Damgaard, I didn't come away with the same positive conclusions as the HBO broadcast team. Yes, Gatti looked like a true welterweight, and, yes, his courage and aggression were inspiring. But after the first few rounds, he barely moved his head or feet. And by the time he stopped Damgaard in the 11th, Gatti was holding his right glove over his nipple.

In some ways, Damgaard reminded me of the latter-stage Joe Frazier, but without Frazier's power. As his ring mileage piled up, Smokin' Joe couldn't slip punches anymore, but he kept coming forward anyway, just like Damgaard. Gatti

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Morales was a sucker for Pacquiao's straight left

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Gatti still hasn't learned to keep his hands up

brought to mind the late-stage Muhammad Ali, who, no longer able to float like a butterfly, relied on his chin and simply ate punches in order to land his own. Against prime, well-conditioned, world-class fighters, the Frazier-Damgaard and Ali-Gatti formulas are magnets for disaster.

As I wrote this, they were already trying to set up a Baldomir-Gatti showdown. It promises to be a sweet payday for both deserving warriors. Baldomir is durable, making him more dangerous than Damgaard. If Gatti doesn't get him out of there in the first few rounds, he'll get beat up no matter who wins.

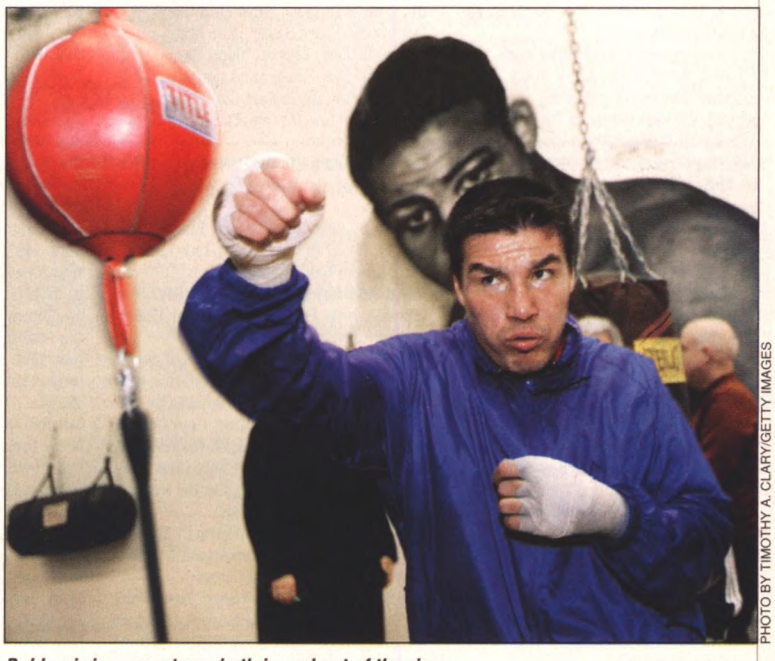
Magoo: I don't get this Baldomir fellow anyway. No one wants to hear him whining that if he'd paid the sanctioning fees demanded by all three alphabet mobs they'd have eaten up his entire $100,000—the gross sum of his earnings for defeating King Judah, ruler of the Land of Excuses.

What? Just because fighters take all the punches they're entitled to some of the money? Somebody must have been sneaking commie juice into Baldomir's water down in Argentina. Alphabet bandits sat on their butts and did nothing a long time so they'd be in position to grab that cash off the table. No foreign upstart should be allowed to foil their schemes.

April Fool, everyone. Baldomir, as you no doubt figured out by now, doesn't really get a Magoo. Instead, he's commended for drawing such crystal-clear attention to the increasingly classless, irrational, Enron-style greed of the alphabet gangs. They're no longer content to wet their beaks. They're out to slurp up every drop.

At this stage of the game, handing out Magoos to these corrupt-o-maniacal bandits is getting redundant. Though I shall continue to address their most horrific crimes, just assume the perennially pathetic putzes earn the prize each and every month for polluting the planet with their pugnacious parade of pernicious, piggish pilfering—and for persistently pissing me off.

Passings: Virginia Bilderrain, 81, wife of retired California matchmaker Jerry Bilderrain, after a long illness; Michael P. Sammon, 39, son of California referee Marty Sammon, of a pulmonary embolism. Rest in peace. ■



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Baldomir is a smart guy both in and out of the ring

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Dec. 2000: The Hell With Tyson—Tua Is The Man Who Could Beat Lewis. Plus: Mike Tyson, Felix Trinidad, Wladimir Klitschko, Trilla in Manila, U.S. vs. World, Toxey Hall.

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July 2002 (108-Page Extra): Exclusive Preview: The Oscar-Fernando Hatefest. Plus: Hopkins & Monzon, Francisco Bojado, Buddy McGirt, Lionel Rose, State of the Game.

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Nov. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Monster Mashed! Can A New Tyson Emerge From The Rubble? Plus: The Ring 100, Evander Holyfield, Don King, Billy Joiner, junior welters.

Jan. 2003 (108-Page Extra): The Golden Boy Proves His Manhood: Is Oscar De La Hoya' Prime Just Beginning? Plus: Michael Grant, David Tua, previews of Morales-Ayala and Ward-Gatti II, overrated/underrated.

Feb. 2003: The Resurrection Of A Warrior: Cam Evander Holyfield Recapture The Glory Of His Youth? Also: Floyd Mayweather Sr., Nate Campbell, Tom & Peter McNeeley, boxing finances, pound-for-pound.

March 2003 (108-Page Extra): Hamed ... Morales ... Tapia: Barrera Has Punched His Ticket To The Hall Of Fame. Also: Joe Mesi, Ricardo Lopez, Pipino Cuevas, alphabet tales, what's ahead for '03.

April 2003: Gatti Has His Ducks In A Row: A New Woman And A New Trainer Put The "Art" Back In Arturo. Also: Barrera-Morales, Roy Jones, Phillip Ndou & Silence Mabuza, Laila Ali, Gorilla Jones,

May 2003 (108-Page Extra): Ali ... Leonard ... Tyson ... Klitschko? Also: Year-end awards, Chris Byrd, Lupe Pintor, Maxie Rosenbloom.

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Summer 2004: Squeezed Out: Is There A Superfight For Felix Trinidad? Also: Joe Mesi, Miguel Cotto, Winky Wright, Ceferino Garcia.

Oct. 2004 (100-Page Extra): The Executioner: There's No Escape For De La Hoya! Also: Verno Phillips, Jose Luis Castillo, Felix Sturm, James Toney, Jeff Lacy, one-punch kayos

Fall 2004: Trinidad vs. Mayorga: Comeback Or Calamity. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Marco Antonio Barrera, Juan Diaz, Jimmy Clabby.

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Feb. 2005 (100-Page Extra): The Incredible Comeback Of Felix Trinidad—Just The Boost Boxing Needs! Also: Glen Johnson, Klitschko-Williams preview, Kasim Ouma, Tony Lopez, Paul Berlenbach, bodypunching.

Winter 2005: 1980s vs. Today: Comparing The Middleweight Superstars. Also: Roy Jones, Leija-Gatti preview, Terry Downes, comebacks.

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Spring 2005—Svelter Welter: Moving To 147 Will Tip The Scale In Oscar's Favor. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Glen Johnson, Andre Ward, Johnny Persol.

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Summer 2005: Gatti vs. Mayweather: Will This Be The Mismatch "Pretty Boy" Predicts? Also: Erik Morales, Miguel Cotto, Mahyar Monshipour, Pinky Silverberg.

August 2005 (100-Page Extra): *The Contender*: Boxing's Ticket Back To The Mainstream? Also: Jorge Acar, Hopkins vs. Jones, Riddick Bowe, Buster Douglas, The State of the Game.

October 2005 (100-Page Extra): Our Man Hatton—Working-Class Warrior Becomes A World-Class Superstar. Plus: Wright-Trinidad, Corrales-Castillo, Kingsley Ikeke, great career come-backs, featherweights.

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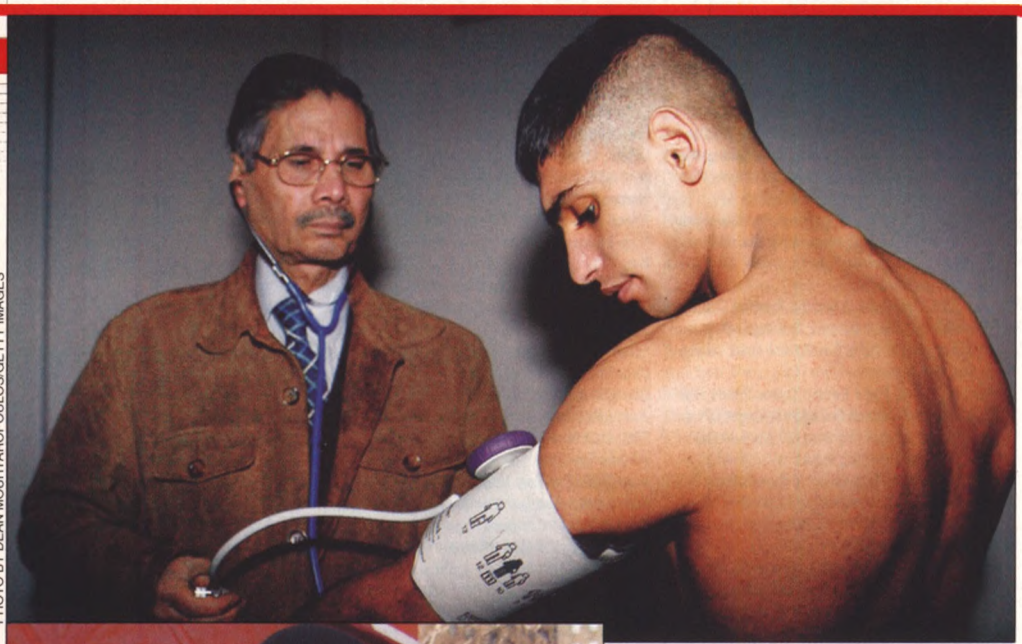

PHOTO BY DEAN MOUHTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES

British sensation Amir Khan certainly knows how to get physical, but he also knows how to take a physical, as he's seen here having his blood pressure checked prior to his January 28 fight against Vitali Martynov in Nottingham, England. It's a good thing Amir's blood pressure checked out normal, because when it gets high, we end up seeing the wrath of Khan. (Sorry, awful joke, but we couldn't help ourselves.)

PHOTO BY ARNALDO MAGNANI/GETTY IMAGES

Heavy fur: James Toney covers his ample torso with a more than ample coat as he stands outside Manhattan's Tavern on the Green after a press conference there to promote his fight with Hasim Rahman. And just in case we weren't worried enough about Toney's conditioning, we learn here that stogies are apparently a staple of his training regimen.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER TAMARGO/GETTY IMAGES

Move over Richard Williams—there's a new wacky old man in Venus' life! Don King poses with the tennis superstar at the recent Intercontinental Ball benefiting the Make-A-Wish Foundation in Miami. No truth to the rumor that DK convinced Williams to let him be her mixed doubles partner at this year's U.S. Open.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER TAMARGO/GETTY IMAGES

At Fox Pan American Sports' Third Annual Premios Fox Sports Awards in Miami, Miguel Cotto emerged from a field that included Diego Corrales, Erik Morales, Marco Antonio Barrera, and Juan Manuel Marquez to win the Boxer of the Year award. Sounds to us a little bit like how all the Desperate Housewives *actresses canceled each other out at the Golden Globes, enabling Mary-Louise Parker from* Weeds *to win. In this case, the Mexican vote got split four ways, allowing the Puerto Rican to escape with the prize. But the news wasn't all bad for Mexican boxing fans, as Julio Cesar Chavez took home a Lifetime Achievement Award.*

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

The next Dawson ... or the next Hamed? Super middleweight "Bad" Chad Dawson's son has his daddy's last name, but his full name is Prince Chadwick Dawson, making you wonder if he might grow up to resemble a certain British featherweight (or even a certain purple-clad rock star). Whoever he takes after, promoter Gary Shaw isn't wasting a moment getting the inside track on guiding the kid's career.

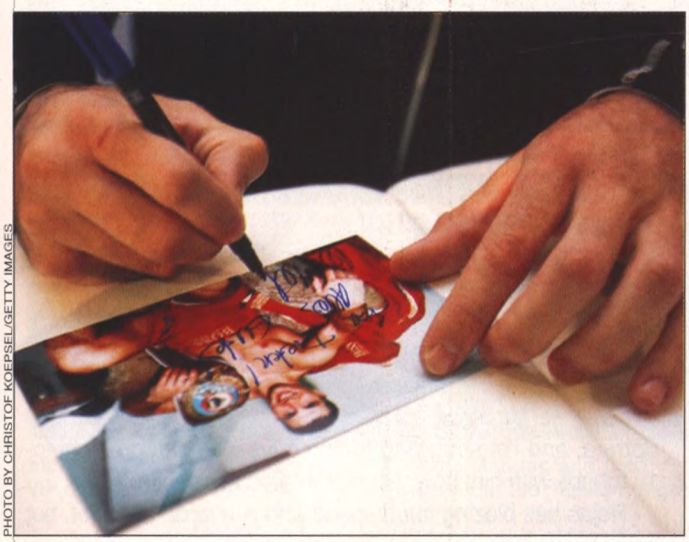

PHOTO BY CHRISTOF KOEPSEL/GETTY IMAGES

Wladimir Klitschko's hands do more than just knock people out; they also Hancock people out. The heavyweight contender recently signed some photos for his fans, and since we speak perfect German, we'll translate this inscription for you: "To Dieter, I'm growing quite woozy from signing all these autographs, somebody must have put too much Vaseline on my hands, I'm going to have to collapse now. Yours truly, Wladimir Klitschko."

Nostalgia Corner

Man, I sure wish they would have allowed me to use this stuff between rounds against Fritzie Zivic! Henry Armstrong take a few whiffs of oxygen between sermons in his after-boxing role as preacher. There's no truth to the rumor that the tank was actually filled with nitrous oxide.

By Joe Santoliquito

Elio Rojas Junior Lightweight

Elio Rojas didn't have to hear anything from his Uncle Victor to know something was wrong that September morning when he came to fetch him at the gym. Victor's dour expression and sunken eyes, looking everywhere but at Elio, told him right before the ominous words hit him—"*Your father is in serious trouble. You better get to the hospital.*"

Elio Ramone Rojas, Elio's father, had been battling stomach cancer for some time at a hospital near the gym where Elio trained. Dealing with his father's condition was something Elio thought he could delay by plunging himself deep into boxing. Now he had to stare at the daunting task of talking to his father for possibly the last time.

Seeing his father lying there, a once-vibrant man wracked by this deadly disease, was a fight in itself. But Elio pulled himself to his father's bedside and listened intently at the last urgings of a man clinging to life, the same man responsible for Elio's boxing success.

"I want you to make me a promise that you'll win an Olympic gold medal, or that one day you'll be a world champion," Elio's father whispered faintly to him, trying to muster the strength to form a smile. Elio just nodded, holding back the tears, he leaned forward and kissed his father goodbye.

One hour later, Elio Ramone Rojas was dead.

Every time Elio puts on a pair of boxing gloves, spars, enters a locker room before a fight, walks to the ring, and starts throwing punches, his father's last words resonate. "The Kid" fights for more than just himself; he fights for his father's memory and as the surrogate man of the house.

Maybe it explains the 23-year-old junior lightweight's urgency to fight the likes of Marco Antonio Barrera, Manny Pacquiao, and Erik Morales tomorrow or the next day, if possible. Maybe it explains his success and the reason why he's a prized prospect in Don King's stable.

Rojas, from San Francisco de Macoris in the Dominican Republic, has chalked up a 15-0 (11) record and has looked impressive doing it. On King's disastrous January 7 Madison Square Garden show, where King headliners Zab Judah and Jean-Marc Mormeck were both upset, Rojas provided one of the few bright spots for the promoter. Rojas put away tough journeyman Priest Smalls in one round. Smalls, 17-10-1 (6), had been previously stopped only once before facing Rojas.

"Beyond the fact that Elio's a very talented fighter, he draws people to him. He has charisma; he has that Felix Trinidad-like quality to him," said Eric Bottjer, King's matchmaker. "People see him for the first time, and they want to see him again. I'm pleased with how he's progressed, but he's not as far along as he thinks he is. He wants to fight Barrera, and I'm struggling to find guys who can go eight-to-10 rounds with him now. I'm real excited about him."

Rojas has blazing hand speed and is a good puncher, but he's still learning defense. Bottjer said that Rojas once had a tendency to keep his hands by his sides early in his career, and took too many unnecessary punches. Rojas has since learned to use his legs more to get out of harm's way.

(Continued on Page 88)

Pro Record

2004		
March 19	Wilson Ramos, New York, NY	KO 1
May 7	Luis Angel Lopez, Mashantucket, CT	W 4
May 14	Ivan Cordero, Brooklyn, NY	KO 1
July 16	Felipe Jorge, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic	KO 3
Aug. 22	Julio Jerez, Santo Domingo	KO 2
Oct. 2	Corey Goodwin, New York	KO 2
Nov. 20	Cristian Martinez, San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic.	KO 1
Dec. 11	Francisco Melendez, San Pedro de Macoris	KO 3
Dec. 17	Elvis Martinez, Santiago de los Caballero, Dominican Republic.	KO 2
2005		
Feb. 5	Yamin Mohammad, St. Louis, MO	KO 3
April 2	Angelo Luis Torres, Worcester, MA	W 6
April 30	Anthony Martinez, New York	W 6
June 18	Dionisio Rodriguez, Santiago de los Caballero	KO 2
Sept. 3	Marty Robbins, Cleveland, OH	W 4
2006		
Jan. 7	Priest Smalls, New York	KO 1

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
15	15	0	0	11

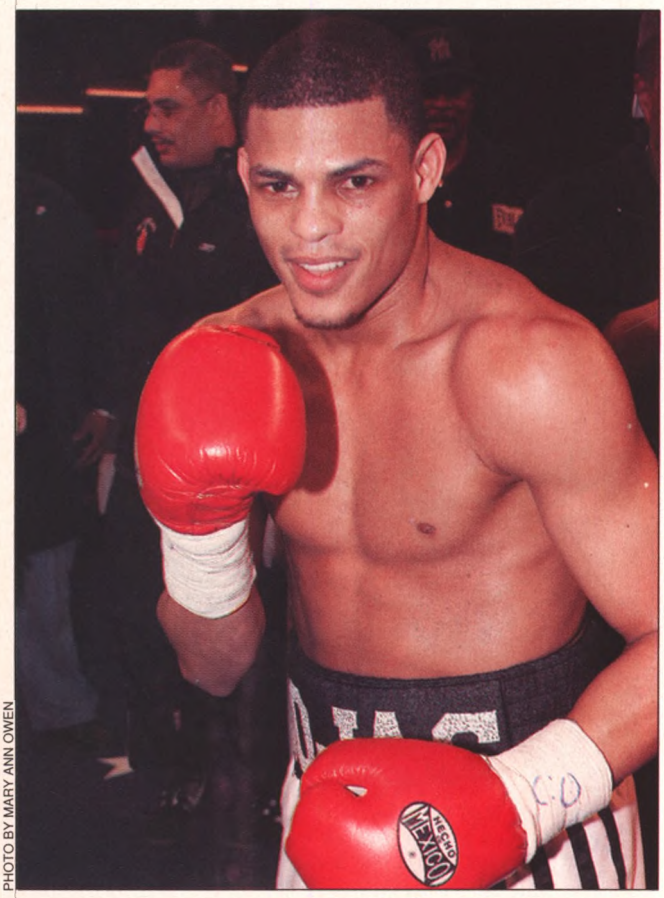

PHOTO BY MARY ANN OWEN

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Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

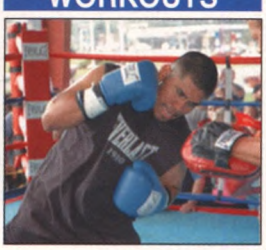
COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

Angelo Dundee and actor Russell Crowe tour the museum together.

WORKOUTS



Juan Diaz works the bag mitts during daily public workouts.

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Stanley Christodoulou reviews referee rules for the fans.

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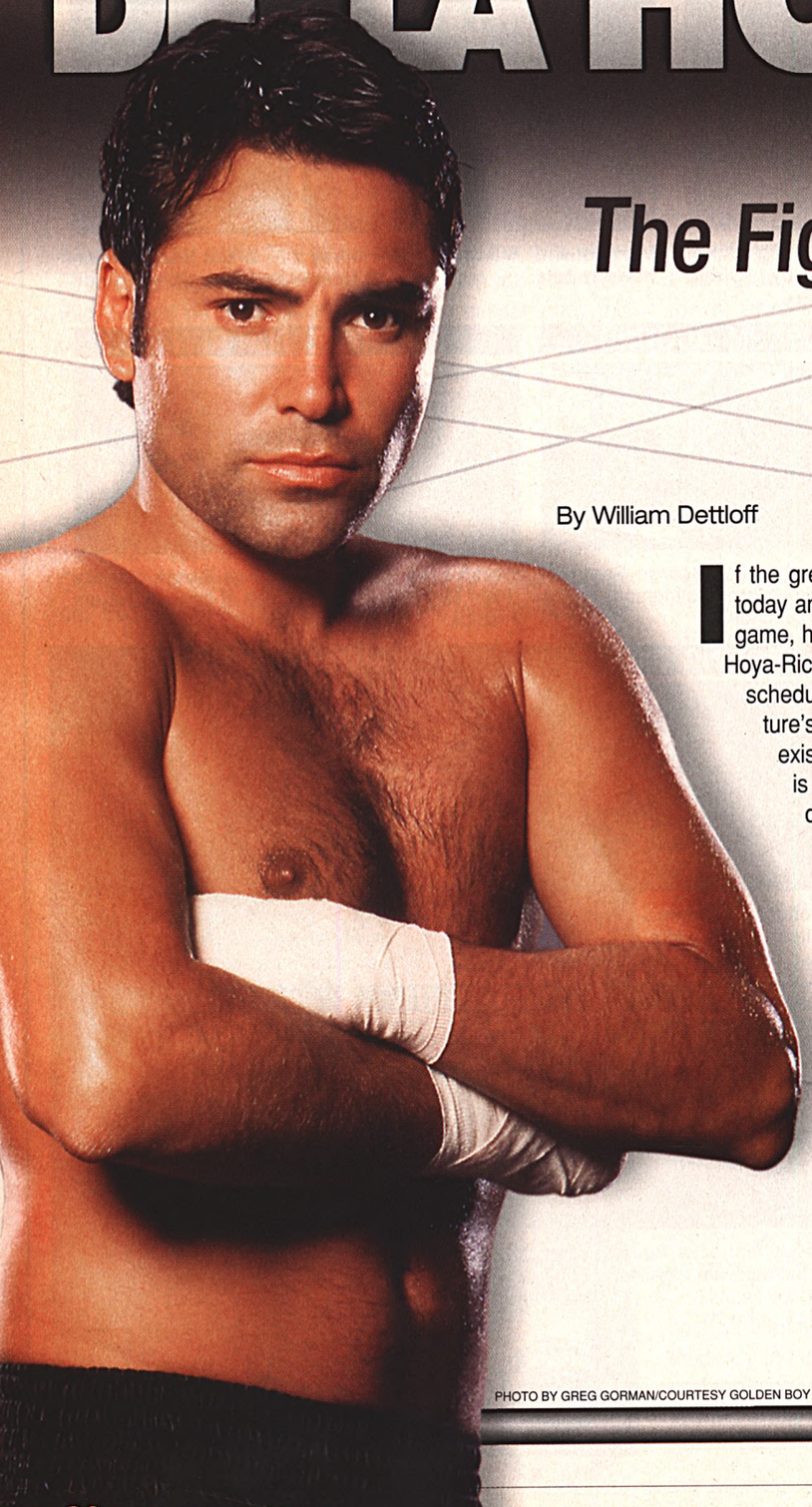
The Fight That Will Decide Oscar's Future



By William Dettloff

If the great novelist John Steinbeck were around today and had even a passing interest in the fight game, he'd be having a ball with the Oscar De La Hoya-Ricardo Mayorga fight, which at this writing is scheduled for May 6. As one of modern literature's best at exploring the great chasms that exist between the haves and the have-nots, it is almost inconceivable that he wouldn't be drawn to this fight. After all, it has the fundamental element that informed most of his better work: the struggle of the underclass against the upper class. Poor against wealthy. The laborers against the landowners.

We know—that's what the fight game is mostly about anyway. Most of the fighters you see sweating and bleeding through undercards don't make enough money fighting to keep the rent current. And they never will. They all struggle on, just the same. Most of them do, anyway. The stars you see pulling down six- or seven-figure purses make up a dismally small percentage of prizefighters overall. Those at the very top make most of the money. But that's the way it is in the fight game and in most everything.

Fortunately for us and Mayorga, 28-5 (23), and all the rest of the pugs out there who can't get a break, the ring is the one place on the planet where a guy who came from nothing and has nothing can punch a millionaire in the mouth and not only escape prosecution, but make a few bucks for himself at the same time. Yes, the odds are against him because the millionaire has all the right connections and the best of everything, but, between the ropes, this is a poor man's game. De La Hoya, 37-4 (29), can't carry his checkbook into the ring with him, not literally anyway, and if he could it wouldn't do any good.

Of course, it would be unfair to forget that De La Hoya was once among the underclass too, not much better off than Mayorga, and he has done, in the grandest way, what Mayorga hopes to—indeed what all fighters hope to. Most of our great prizefighters come from nothing, and it makes perfect sense when you consider it's easy to sacrifice everything when you don't have anything. What's to lose?

It would be inaccurate too to say Mayorga

PHOTO BY GREG GORMAN/COURTESY GOLDEN BOY

PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

The last time De La Hoya fought, he ended up writhing in agony on the canvas after absorbing a left hook to the body from then-middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins. This is not the way "The Golden Boy" wants to be remembered.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

For the better part of two years, most of De La Hoya's focus has been on promoting the various fighters in his stable, such as Marco Antonio Barrera, Shane Mosley, and Hopkins. By the time he steps into the ring with Mayorga, De La Hoya will not have fought in 20 months.

occupies the very lowest rung in the fight game economy; certainly he was paid well enough for his bouts with Vernon Forrest, Cory Spinks, Felix Trinidad, and Michele Piccirillo. But clearly in this bout he is the laborer to De La Hoya's landowner. Remember who his promoter is, after all. And who promotes De La Hoya too.

But for the most part, it is what the two can do with their fists that will determine what happens when they get together in May. It should come as no surprise that the questions the fight raises have mostly to do with De La Hoya. It's the way it's been most of his career: Is he ready for this guy?; will his head be there?; is he doing too much outside the ring?; etc. Most of De La Hoya's opponents, after he became the biggest nonheavyweight in the business, all became rather a faceless amalgam. It didn't matter much what they did or didn't do. It all depended on what *De La Hoya* did. Just about every De La Hoya fight is really about De La Hoya. So it is now.

For example, we don't know what to really call him anymore. Is he a fighter? A promoter? Is he a junior middleweight, or a big welterweight? Is this fight a farewell bout, one last appearance, or does it lead to something? Does this mean he'll get on a regular fighting schedule, or is it to end his career with a hoped-for win? Does he even want to fight?

"I think this fight will reveal what Oscar's intentions are," said HBO's Larry Merchant. "This is not an easy fight. It is the kind of fight that, if he's not in top shape, he could lose. And we don't really know how serious he is about fighting. Right now, he's out there as more of a promoter than a fighter. I think if he should win in style, it could propel him to another big fight or two. When you can make eight figures—and he's the only fighter who can do that right now, in any weight class—it makes sense from a business standpoint."

No one will ever doubt De La Hoya's business acumen—or at the least his ability to surround himself with the right people. His parting with Bob Arum may have been acrimonious, but De La Hoya already was a multimillionaire when they split. De La Hoya appears to have done everything right toward setting himself up for a long and comfortable retirement, the appearance of which has been on the horizon for a seemingly long while now.

Consider the frequency with which De La Hoya has gone to work over the past several years. The last year in which he fought more than twice was 1999, seven years ago. He fought two times each in 2000, '01, '03, and '04. Just once in '02 and not at all in '05. Sure, you can get away with that when you net millions in the double-digits every time out. He doesn't fight to pay the rent. But one would think a fighter who is hungry for and still focused on the ring—two requirements of anyone fighting Mayorga—would want to be a little more active, no?

If De La Hoya's aging rock star schedule is a boon to Mayorga, and conventional wisdom would say that it is, then De La Hoya's recent inactivity isn't bad for Mayorga either. By the time they get together, De La Hoya will have been off for 20 months, by far his longest stretch of idleness. Mayorga will be coming off *only* a nine-month layoff—not terrible by today's standards, but long enough that Harry Greb or Archie Moore would certainly have gone stir-crazy.

"Oscar has always had periods when he's been idle for long periods, and he's then come back and fought hard and fought well," Merchant told THE RING. "He's a thoroughbred and a good fighter." This is true; when you average two fights a year over the past five, you're enjoying long stretches in between, but De La Hoya has never appeared rusty from inactivity. When he's lost, it's been because better fighters beat him, more or less, not because his timing wasn't there or he lost his ability to take a punch.

Still, such a lax schedule is suggestive of a guy who really isn't into prizefighting anymore and one wonders why De La Hoya, with his mansion in Puerto Rico, gorgeous wife, newborn baby, and successful business would still want to get busted on the nose when he doesn't have to.

"Nobody wants to go out a loser," offered veteran trainer Tommy Brooks. "He understands this is about his lega-

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

In his most recent bout, Mayorga won a 12-round decision over Michele Piccirillo (pictured) to claim a vacant alphabet belt at 154 pounds. Some experts think he's the perfect comeback foil for De La Hoya, while others believe the Nicaraguan crazy man could very well spring an upset.

cy. After his last two fights, he wants to get a good win under his belt. It's hard to say what he'll do after this, but building his legacy is what his whole career has been about."

De La Hoya's last two fights—a disputed win over Felix Sturm in an abominable, albeit gutsy, performance, and his bodyshot knockout loss to Bernard Hopkins, which in the view of many was something less than gutsy at its conclusion—are not the kind of fights on which one would ideally retire. This is especially true for a guy like De La Hoya, who has been among the sport's elite for so long. It's interesting then that he took his sweet time getting back in the ring. Less secure fighters would have rushed back into the fray to help erase the memory of those back-to-back nightmares, but De La Hoya, ever the picture of cool, has been in no such rush. He took his time picking Mayorga, and, to some, the reasons Mayorga was chosen are clear.

"I've never been impressed with Mayorga; I never thought he was that good," said Emanuel Steward, who, in the late-1990s, enjoyed a brief tenure as De La Hoya's trainer. "He just doesn't have the skills to compete at this level. Just being physically strong and strong-minded, that doesn't work at the world-class level. Oscar's boxing skills should be too much for him."

Steward says he trained Mayorga for a few days prior to Mayorga's loss to Cory Spinks in December '03, so he knows him up-close. "Don King called me and asked me to train him, and, after two days, I quit. Don asked me why. I said, 'He can't fight.' If I was going to train him it would take a compete overhaul. I would have had to have complete control of all the training and take him back to Detroit with me, take him to the Kronk, like I did with Oliver

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

In his most recent ring victory, De La Hoya won a controversial decision over Felix Sturm in June 2004. While it was far from his finest performance, the poorly conditioned De La Hoya did show courage by rallying down the stretch.

McCall. After that, I knew Cory Spinks would beat him even though everyone else was saying it was a mismatch.

"Mayorga made his reputation on the first Vernon Forrest fight," Steward continued. "Having trained Vernon for a short while, I know that he had a badly damaged left shoulder and couldn't really jab, really couldn't do anything with it. Mayorga's whole career has been based off that one fight. I'm not that impressed."

Still, Steward concedes that anything can happen against a guy like Mayorga.

"A lot of things could point to a victory for Mayorga—if De La Hoya has lost his focus or doesn't really care about boxing anymore," Steward said. "And it's been a long time since Oscar has had a victory over a credible opponent. I wouldn't be shocked if Mayorga won. But I know De La Hoya is very focused and prepared for this fight, and it wouldn't surprise me if Oscar stopped him."

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mayorga's wild-swinging style is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, he's unpredictable and opponents never quite know from what direction his hard blows are coming. But his lack of technique could be a huge handicap against a smart boxer such as De La Hoya.

It could be that we are assuming incorrectly that Mayorga will be what he always has been: a brutish streetfighter, all bravado and puffed-out-chest, challenging De La Hoya's manhood with swinging overhand rights and crude hooks from everywhere. It might be that the work he began with Yoel Judah, the seeds of which we saw begin to sprout in his win over Piccirillo, have begun to bloom. He wasn't exactly the guy we saw terrorize Forrest and others. He jabbed. He moved his head a little. He kept his hands higher. He fought more civilized, if that's not too much of a contradiction in terms. Whether that refinement will continue against De La Hoya remains to be seen. Just as important is the question of whether or not anyone should be tinkering with Mayorga's style to begin with.

"There's nothing wrong with trying to fight smarter," Merchant said. "But I don't know if he can or should change. He is who he is. You have to dance with the one who brought you. I don't know what he can do. He's got his style and strength and great enthusiasm. That may be enough. It may be his best chance."

The question exists as to how De La Hoya will fight too. Clearly, he doesn't have the power or physical strength to go right at Mayorga and bomb away the way rival Felix Trinidad did when he overpowered and stopped Mayorga in October '04. The last time we saw De La Hoya attempt that style was against Sturm, and it wasn't a pretty sight. But nor is he the fleet-footed De La Hoya we remember motoring around the ring and boxing the ears off Trinidad in their September '99 showdown. He's a 33-year-old veteran who can box well enough when he has to, as he did in the second Mosley fight and against Fernando Vargas too.

"Oscar is a pinpoint puncher, and Mayorga is wild, just all over the place," said Brooks. "Oscar will get him to run into something. Oscar's a precision puncher. It doesn't matter how long he's been off. He's a world-class professional athlete, and it's just like riding a bike. He knows what he's doing in there. I like Oscar by a knockout."

There's little doubt De La Hoya is the better boxer. What we don't know is if he's still a fighter. It's easy to get used to the good life, and all those comforts, after a while, steal away your anger. Mayorga, for all his flaws, is all fighter, and will ask that question of De La Hoya for as long as their fight goes. He may not like the answer he gets. ■

LICENSE TO THRILL

PAC-MANIA EXPLODES WORLDWIDE!

By Don Stradley

American movie houses may never book his latest film, *Lisensyadong Kamao* (*A License To Punch*), but American fight fans are beginning to understand why Manny Pacquiao is such a big star in the Philippines. With an animalistic fury that recalled the vintage days of Aaron Pryor and Roberto Duran, he thrashed Erik Morales in January, leaving no doubt that he is one of the top fighters of this era.

Pacquiao fought as if he wanted to shove our words down our throats. We said he had no right hand; he punished Morales all night with it. We said he became flustered if he couldn't dominate an opponent; he showed uncharacteristic poise as he overwhelmed Morales with an intelligent fight plan. "Pac-Man" also unveiled a new addition to his arsenal—a crunching right hook to the body. Publicist Fred Sternburg had dubbed the punch "Manila Ice," because it was designed to cool Morales off.

Along with his ferocious body attack, Pacquiao landed blood-curdling shots to Morales' face until the Mexican's nose looked like a piece of rotten fruit. By the 10th round, when Morales slumped to the canvas in defeat, every reporter at ringside was adjusting his pound-for-pound list to elevate Pacquiao. As boxing historian Bert Sugar said, "Paquiao is now in position to start making money that hasn't even been printed yet."

Zahir Raheem may be wondering what the fuss is about; he outpointed Morales just four months earlier and didn't get half the accolades that Pacquiao is getting. But prizefighting is about excitement, and Pacquiao could teach a

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Pacquaio fires a right hand at Erik Morales en route to a thrilling knockout victory in their much-anticipated rematch. Pac-Man's emphatic triumph over his previous conqueror rocketed the Filipino dynamo to new heights of popularity.

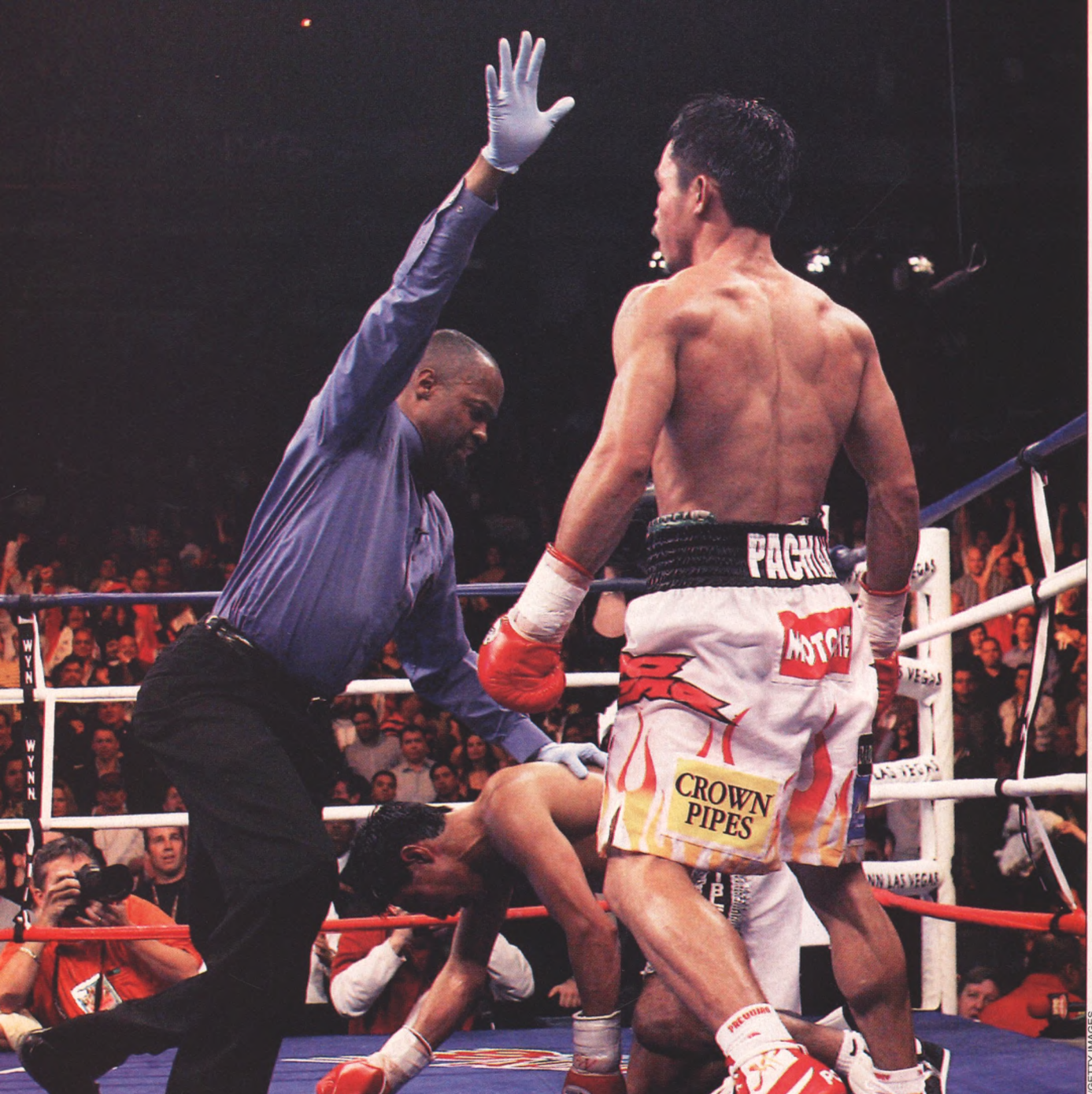


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Morales was in the fight for the first five rounds but gradually faded under Pacquiao's blistering attack. After the second knockdown of the 10th round, referee Kenny Bayless dispensed with the count and waved the fight off.

master class. In fact, he might be the most exciting fighter working today.

It's impossible to imagine Pacquiao conferring with trainer Freddie Roach and saying, "Let's come up with a dull, safety-first strategy so I can just win on points. I'll entertain the fans some other time." Hell no. Manny Pacquiao wants to be Mr. Excitement *all* the time. Even when he's not at his best, he guarantees some thrills.

In 2001, he found himself being fouled constantly by Agapito Sanchez. Bleeding and frustrated, Packy was banging his gloves together and scowling as if he planned to ruin Sanchez. That one ended in a six-round technical draw. The other draw on Pac-Man's 49-3-2 (35) record, his 2004 rumble with Juan Manual Marquez, was also enthralling. Pacquiao, hobbling forward on blistered feet, forced Marquez to fight harder than he ever had before. And in his first bout

with Morales, blinded by his own blood and behind on points, Pacquiao still came out gunning in the final round and hurt Morales.

Who is more exciting than Pacquiao? Only a handful of fighters even come close.

Arturo Gatti has been the sport's most exciting performer for a decade. Sometimes, Gatti seems less like a fighter and more like a guy who took up boxing because he couldn't find a job getting shot out of a cannon. His recent win over Thomas Damgaard showed that he still has some fire in the furnace, but while Gatti has been exciting against good but not great fighters, Pacquiao is exciting against future Hall of

PACQUIAO & REYES KO MORALES

Is it the gloves, or is it what's inside the gloves? In the case of the Pacquiao-Morales saga, it seems to be a little bit of both.

Before their first fight last March, Morales and Pacquiao argued over the brand of gloves that were going to be used. Morales' choice of Winning gloves were chosen even though Team Pacquiao was not happy with that decision. Morales went on to win a unanimous decision, and Pacquiao used the gloves as one of the excuses as to why he lost.

This time, since the rules in Nevada have changed, each fighter was allowed to choose any approved brand of gloves. Pacquiao choose Reyes, the so-called "puncher's gloves," while Morales stayed with Winning. Pacquiao, as an extraordinarily hard puncher cased in puncher's gloves, became the first fighter to stop Morales.

"I think the gloves worked great," Pacquiao said. "They are very comfortable, and I like them." Freddie Roach, Pacquiao's trainer, went on to say, "Well, look at his face. These are puncher's gloves, and I think tonight was proof that the gloves make a huge difference."

Maybe so, but the cumulative effect of all the wars Morales has found himself in, combined with Pacquiao having grown into the 130-pound class more over the past year, made a huge difference as well.

Morales, 130, Tijuana, Mexico, started the first round moving to his left, away from Pacquiao's southpaw lefts, and landed straight rights to his opponent's chin that had him backing off. But Pacquiao, 128½, Cebu City, Philippines, hit Morales in the second with two good left hands to the chin that hurt him.

Morales, a former titleholder in three weight divisions, regained some of his composure in the next few rounds, using his jab more and landing right uppercuts when Pacquiao came close. After the loss in his last fight to Zahir Raheem, many observers thought Morales might be done, but through five rounds of this fight, he was looking sharp.

But Pacquiao took over after the fifth round. Better head movement and a good right jab were setting up Pacquiao's left hand, as he hurt Morales with punches to the head, and the Mexican looked almost out of it at the end of the sixth. Pacquiao, 41-3-2 (33), was chopping Morales down with bodyshots. He won the seven, eighth, and ninth rounds decisively.

In the 10th, a crushing left to Morales' head sent him down to the canvas. He got up, exhausted, and Pacquiao landed a few more shots. Morales fell down again, prompting referee Kenny Bayless (USA) to step in immediately and stop the fight at 2:33 of round 10.

"Well, this time I didn't have any distractions," Pacquiao, 41-3-2 (33), said. "I fought the way I wanted to and I was just better. I think it was the body attack that really hurt him."

Morales, 48-4 (34), was sent to the hospital for precautionary measures and released a short time after. He has a rematch clause in his contract, but surely he will need a long rest before he fights again.

The bout was fought in front of 14,618 wildly enthusiastic fans at the Thomas & Mack Center.

—Wayne McCullough

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Pacquiao drives a left between Morales' guard

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The weekend after Pacquiao mowed down Morales, Arturo Gatti proved he still has a lot of fight left in him by stopping previously undefeated Thomas Damgaard after a good scrap. Whether or not "The Human Highlight Reel" can keep pace with Pacquiao remains to be seen.

name sounds like it belongs on the marquee of an opera house. But just as the greatest of opera singers can't compete with icons of the pop culture, a guy out of a cheesy martial arts movie is upstaging Gatti the Great.

Fortunately, Pacquiao and Gatti fight on HBO, so we'll never have to pick one over the other if they were scheduled on the same night but on different networks. But if faced with a choice, Showtime commentator Steve Farhood sided with Pac-Man. "For *my* viewing pleasure, Pacquiao has definitely passed Gatti as boxing's most exciting fighter. Not that Gatti has turned into Larry Donald, but Pacquiao is knocking out some of the best fighters in the business. I'd watch Pacquiao if he were reading the Manila phone book."

Another fighter who scores high in the thrill department is Diego Corrales. A throwback to the great gunslingers of the past, Corrales is even more dangerous when wounded. But Pacquiao edges him for one main reason: Pacquiao is tiny, while Corrales towers over opponents. Part of being exciting is that you're usually an underdog, and being so large takes away Corrales' underdog appeal. It's much more exciting to watch a mighty mite like Pacquiao buzzsaw his way through larger opponents.

"Corrales can't cut off a ring," said Sugar. "His chin isn't the greatest. Mayweather screwed him into the canvas. But he takes people out. He's like Bob Satterfield—hit him first, you win. He hits you first, he wins. There's excitement there, but it's of a different type. One is appreciation for Pacquiao, one is Famers. That's the difference.

"Pacquiao is more exciting than Gatti for different reasons," Sugar told THE RING. "Arturo Gatti is exciting only because he's a blood-and-guts fighter. You want to see how much he can take before you see what he gives. Pacquiao is a tornado. I haven't seen anything like him since the old films of Henry Armstrong. He's exciting because of what he dishes out, not what he takes. Gatti fighting Damgaard, the Danish pastry, was that exciting? Gatti is called 'The Human Highlight Reel,' but Damgaard, Micky Ward, and Wilson Rodriguez are not on anyone's list of great fighters. Pacquiao is exciting because of what he does and how he does it. Gatti's best punch is a left jaw to the right glove."

Part of why Gatti is so exciting comes from being easy to read: He grimaces when hurt, trying to communicate his pain to the back row. When fatigued his body sways like a dynamited bridge. If you didn't know better, you'd swear he was doing this for show, the way an opera singer wrings out the final note of a song. Even Gatti's

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

No debate about who is today's most exciting fighter would be complete without mentioning Diego "Chico" Corrales, pictured celebrating his up-from-the-floor knockout of Jose Luis Castillo in May 2005.

MANNY OF THE MASSES

Some Filipinos have taken to calling him "The National Fist" or "The Thorn Of Mexico" or just plain "Idol." But perhaps the best description of Manny Pacquiao as seen through the eyes of his adoring countrymen came from a Manila columnist who said, "He is *masa* (of the masses)."

In the Philippines, where 75 percent of the 80 million plus people are considered *masa*, which is another way of saying they are utterly poor and often hungry—calling him that is the ultimate sign of affection. Pacquiao came from the same poverty-stricken situation in which most of them now find themselves. He represents their hopes, their aspirations. And so, when Pacquiao returned to the country triumphant after his convincing thrashing of Erik Morales, those masses, trapped in a rotten and ugly political and economic system, poured out everything in their hearts.

PHOTO BY JOEL NITO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Pacquiao poses with wife, Jinky, Philippines President Arroyo, and his mother, Dionisia

It was a reception on a level rarely seen in the Philippines. From the moment he stepped off the plane, Paquiao was welcomed with squeals and shouts. Later that day at Malacanang, the presidential palace, Pac-Man met up with President Gloria Arroyo, who presented him with miniature chicken pies shaped like little boxing gloves.

From there he embarked on a five-hour parade through the sprawling metropolis. Adoring fans, young and old, rich and poor, poured out of their homes, offices, and schools just to catch a glimpse of their hero, and maybe grab a photo on their mobile phones. The folks in Chinatown presented Pacquiao with a traditional lion dance. Around every corner fireworks were set off and confetti rained downed from high rises above. Later that night at a massive free street party, he entertained the crowd by singing his hit new song, "This Fight Is For You," along with the president.

This is a nation absolutely starved for heroes and Filipinos aren't letting go of this one. Weeks after the fight, Pacquiao is literally everywhere one looks: television talk shows, several articles a day in every paper, on the radio, on billboards, in the movies. He's even in the scandal sheets, which have revealed that Pacquiao was sued by an old girlfriend for support of a love child.

But even a tawdry scandal can't put a dent in the people's love for their revered icon. After all, Pacquiao is of them. And in the Philippines, capturing the hearts of the downtrodden is about as high as one can get.

—Ted Lerner

PHOTO BY JOEL NITO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Jubilant Filipinos lined the street of Manila to welcome Pac-Man home

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Although he's only a flyweight, Jorge Arce, pictured on the attack against Hussein Hussein, is another go-for-broke crowd-pleaser. Like so many reckless sluggers, Arce spices up his performances by frequently overcoming bloody facial injuries.

amazement for Gatti, and for Corrales, it's suspense: Who lands first?"

"Diego Corrales has been thrilling," said Farhood. "Even if the first Jose Luis Castillo fight were the only bout of Chico's career, he'd belong on any list. Corrales may be on the downside, but his power and his let's-make-war attitude will keep him as a must-see."

Junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton wasn't chosen as THE RING's 2005 Fighter of the Year by being a bore, and Farhood rates him high in the thrill-for-thrill category. "Ricky Hatton is thrilling because of his intensity. Add the atmosphere in Manchester and his fights have been not only special, but unique. American fans will quickly take to him, but don't expect the same electricity as when he fights in MEN Arena. And Hatton doesn't have that one-punch power, although Carlos Maussa might argue the point."

There are similarities between Hatton and Pacquiao, and not just because of their huge followings at home. Both guys have solid chins—Pacquiao was kayoed twice during his days at flyweight, but at 130 he absorbed Morales' best shots—and both guys are prone to cuts. Gore equals excitement, and both fighters have had to beat fighters with blood flooding their eyes. Both guys are able to knock an opponent out in the late rounds. We might lean toward Pacquiao because his whirlwind attack is more attractive than Hatton's smothering style, but as far as pure excitement goes, it's a close race between these two.

Miguel Cotto has the ingredients of an action fighter: a big punch, a willingness to trade, and a vulnerable chin. As he showed in his brutal bout last year with Ricardo Torres, he's able to come back from oblivion. He doesn't have the lengthy resume of a Pacquiao or a Gatti, but he's on his way.

Mexico's Jorge Arce is part rodeo clown and part slugging machine. Boxing's most animated character since the heyday of Jorge Paez, Arce could one day rival Pacquiao. It's difficult for a flyweight to make an impression on American sports fans that tend to super-size everything, but Arce, if he ever gets off of pay-per-view undercards and onto HBO's regular rotation, might do it through sheer bravado. Cruiserweight champion O'Neill Bell, IBF super middleweight titleholder Jeff Lacy, and WBO bantam boss Jhonny Gonzalez can all provide excitement, but they lack Arce's personality. Excitement is not just about knockouts. Mike Tyson knocked fighters out, but his thrill factor was doubled by his mercurial personality. Pacquiao isn't a nutcase, but along with his ability to light up an opponent is a puckish persona that is pretty irresistible.

Example: During the prefight instructions prior to the first Morales fight, referee Jay Nady told Pacquiao that he couldn't hit a fighter while he was down. Pacquiao asked Nady, What if the fighter is halfway down, and has a glove on the canvas? Can I hit him then? Nady said no, of course not. Pacquiao nodded, and then gave his handlers the dirtiest, most mischievous grin this side of Jack Nicholson. Having his secret punch named Manila Ice earns him points too. As far as cool nicknames for punches, that's right up there with Ali's "Ghetto Whopper" and Marciano's "Suzy Q."

Pacquiao is even exciting against unheralded opponents. After stalking Manny Lucero like a cat who had discovered some strange kind of mouse, he kayoed Lucero with a perfect left cross; he sent Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym out of the ring on a stretcher; Fahsan 3K Battery was destroyed in four

rounds; Hector Valesquez lasted six rounds before Pacquiao stopped him. At his best, Pacquiao approaches each opponent as if were running crazily around a fortress to find his way in. His opponents probably think they're okay because they survive the first few rounds, but Pacquiao is gradually getting through to his target. It's fascinating to watch.

"I'd rate them, in order: Pacquaio, Gatti, Hatton, Corrales, with Pacquiao the one I'd watch if given only one choice," said Farhood.

Still, some Gatti supporters refuse to concede.

"Gatti is more exciting, no doubt about it," said trainer and HBO analyst Emanuel Steward. "He's explosive, he's exciting. Pacquiao is a busy little guy, but Gatti is full of drama. He gets hurt in fights, he's on the verge of being knocked out, but he can come storming back and have the other guy out on his feet. He gets busted up, broken hands, eyes swollen, bleeding, but he can come back and knock you out with one single punch. To me, there's no comparison. Just based on drama, and emotional, roller-coaster situations, I've got to go with Gatti. A lot of guys can be exciting, but they don't have the physical problems this guy does. He's a strange man. Some people are born with it in their genes. Pacquiao is an excellent fighter, but he's not like Gatti."

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

A happy Pac-Man hoists the flag of the Philippines after knocking out Morales. That's co-manager Shelly Finkel on the left and promoter Gary Shaw on the right. There were approximately 7,000 Filipinos among the crowd of more than 14,000 at the fight.

Still, even Gatti's most loyal fans have to know their man is running on fumes. But when Gatti can no longer provide us with boxing's version of a holy resurrection, there will be a force of nature blowing in from the Philippines to amaze us in his absence. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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Oct. 1983: Is Larry Holmes Finished? Color Pinup: Greg Page. Interview: Marvis Frazier. Also: Marvin Hagler, Bobby Chacon, Jack Dempsey.

July 1984: Donald Curry: "I'm Better Under Pressure." Color Pinup: Gerrie Coetzee. Interview: Curry. Also: Pipino Cuevas, John Mugabi, Bill Costello, M. Spinks-Davis.

Aug. 1984: WBC Heavyweight Champion Terrible Tim Witherspoon: A Superstar Of Tomorrow? Color Pinup: Rocky Lockridge. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Marvin Hagler, Gomez-LaPorte.

Oct. 1984: Golden Boy Mark Breland: Can He Be The Next Sugar Ray? Color Pinup: Jaime Garza. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Bramble-Mancini, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Nov. 1984: Thomas Hearns: "Hagler Is Shakin' Like A Leaf On A Tree!" Color Pinup: Tim Witherspoon. Interview: Livingstone Bramble. Also: Rosario-Davis, Marlon Starling.

Feb. 1985: Gerry Cooney: How Far Can He Go This Time? Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Ray Mancini. Also: Dream fights, Hector Camacho.

March 1985: Next For Marvelous Marvin Hagler: The Only Fight That Really Matters. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza, Holmes-Bonecrusher.

May 1985: Thomas Hearns: *KO* Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

July 1985: Aaron Pryor: Has Hawk Time Run Out? Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Greg Page. Also: Ray Mancini, James Shuler, Costello-Hatcher.

Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, DeWitt-Lee.

Oct. 1985: Still Champ After All These Years: Larry Holmes—A Legend Continues To Grow. Interview: Mark Breland. Also: Michael Spinks, Milton McCrory, Wilfredo Gomez.

Nov. 1985: McGuigan! The Pluck Of The Irish. Also: Julio Cesar Chavez, Thomas-Weaver, Donald Curry, featherweights.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

Feb. 1986: King Michael: How Long Will He Rule The Heavyweights? Also: Barry McGuigan, Shawn O'Sullivan, Spinks-Holmes, *Rocky IV*, world's best fighter poll.

Oct. 1986: They're Back!!! The Cooney Circus Returns. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Jimmy Paul, Mike Tyson, Donald Curry.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Also: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: *KO's* Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Dec. 1988: Sugar Ray's Comeback: Why? Color Pinup: Simon Brown. Interview: Kevin Rooney. Also: Michael Nunn, best fighter poll, welterweight wars.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Aug. 1989: Special 100th Issue. Color Pinup: Hagler vs. Hearns. Also: The *KO* Years, 50 most influential people, '80s ratings, best of *KO* Interview, year-by-year review, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

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July 1990: *KO* Interview—Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: *KO* Interview—Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

Nov. 1990: The Comeback Of Mike Tyson: A Crooked Course Straight To The Top. Color Pinup: Tony Lopez. Interview: Don Dunphy. Also: Davis-Breland, Riddick Bowe, federal commission.

Dec. 1990: The Heart Of The Matter: Who Will Survive The Holyfield-Douglas War? Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Michael Carbajal, Ruelas Brothers, best fighter poll.

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May 1991: Ruddock Eyes The Big Upset Of Tyson. Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Jeff Fenech. Also: Virgil Hill, Pernell Whitaker, Alex Ramos, Simon Brown, Buddy McGirt.

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Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

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Aug. 1997: Oscar Reaches ... But Can't Grasp The Stars. Color Pinup: Nate Miller. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Norris-Trinidad preview, Hall of Fame, Angel Manfredy.

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Jones, Baby Jake Matlala, Boxing 2000.

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Feb. 1998: Is Lennox Lewis The World's Best Heavyweight? Color Pinup: Charles Brewer. Interview: Marc Ratner. Also: Otis Grant, Arturo Gatti.

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Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Also: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Also: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

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Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns." Color Pinup: Steve Johnston. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

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Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story." Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Also: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom ... Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Also: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

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Winter 2002: A Realistic Look At Tyson's Comeback: He Can't Make History, But He Can Make Millions. Interview: Micky Ward. Also: Antonio Tarver, Antwun Echols, Acelino Freitas.

March 2003: Oscar De La Hoya—The War That Rages Within. Interview: Klitschko brothers. Also: Kassim Ouma, Eric Morel, holiday gifts.

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❑ AUG/83	❑ SEP/88	❑ JUL/92	❑ HOL/98	❑ AUG/01
❑ OCT/83	❑ OCT/88	❑ AUG/92	❑ JAN/99	❑ OCT/01
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❑ AUG/84	❑ JAN/89	❑ OCT/92	❑ MAR/99	❑ FEB/02
❑ OCT/84	❑ AUG/89	❑ NOV/92	❑ MAY/99	❑ APR/02
❑ NOV/84	❑ SEP/89	❑ DEC/92	❑ JUN/99	❑ JUN/02
❑ FEB/85	❑ FEB/90	❑ JAN/93	❑ JUL/99	❑ AUG/02
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❑ MAY/85	❑ JUL/90	❑ MAR/93	❑ SEP/99	❑ DEC/02
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❑ AUG/85	❑ SEP/90	❑ JUN/95	❑ NOV/99	❑ MAR/03
❑ OCT/85	❑ OCT/90	❑ SEP/96	❑ DEC/99	❑ MAY/03
❑ NOV/85	❑ NOV/90	❑ NOV/96	❑ HOL/99	❑ JUL/03
❑ DEC/85	❑ DEC/90	❑ DEC/96	❑ JAN/00	❑ SEP/03
❑ JAN/86	❑ JAN/91	❑ WIN/96	❑ FEB/00	❑ NOV/03
❑ FEB/86	❑ FEB/91	❑ JAN/97	❑ MAR/00	❑ WIN/03
❑ OCT/86	❑ MAY/91	❑ AUG/97	❑ MAY/00	❑ FEB/04
❑ DEC/86	❑ JUN/91	❑ HOL/97	❑ JUN/00	❑ APR/04
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❑ JUN/87	❑ AUG/91	❑ FEB/98	❑ AUG/00	❑ OCT/04
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❑ NOV/87	❑ OCT/91	❑ MAY/98	❑ OCT/00	❑ JUN/05
❑ DEC/87	❑ DEC/91	❑ JUN/98	❑ NOV/00	
❑ JAN/88	❑ JAN/92	❑ AUG/98	❑ DEC/00	
❑ FEB/88	❑ MAR/92	❑ SEP/98	❑ FEB/01	
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THE RACE TO FIGHT BALDOMIR

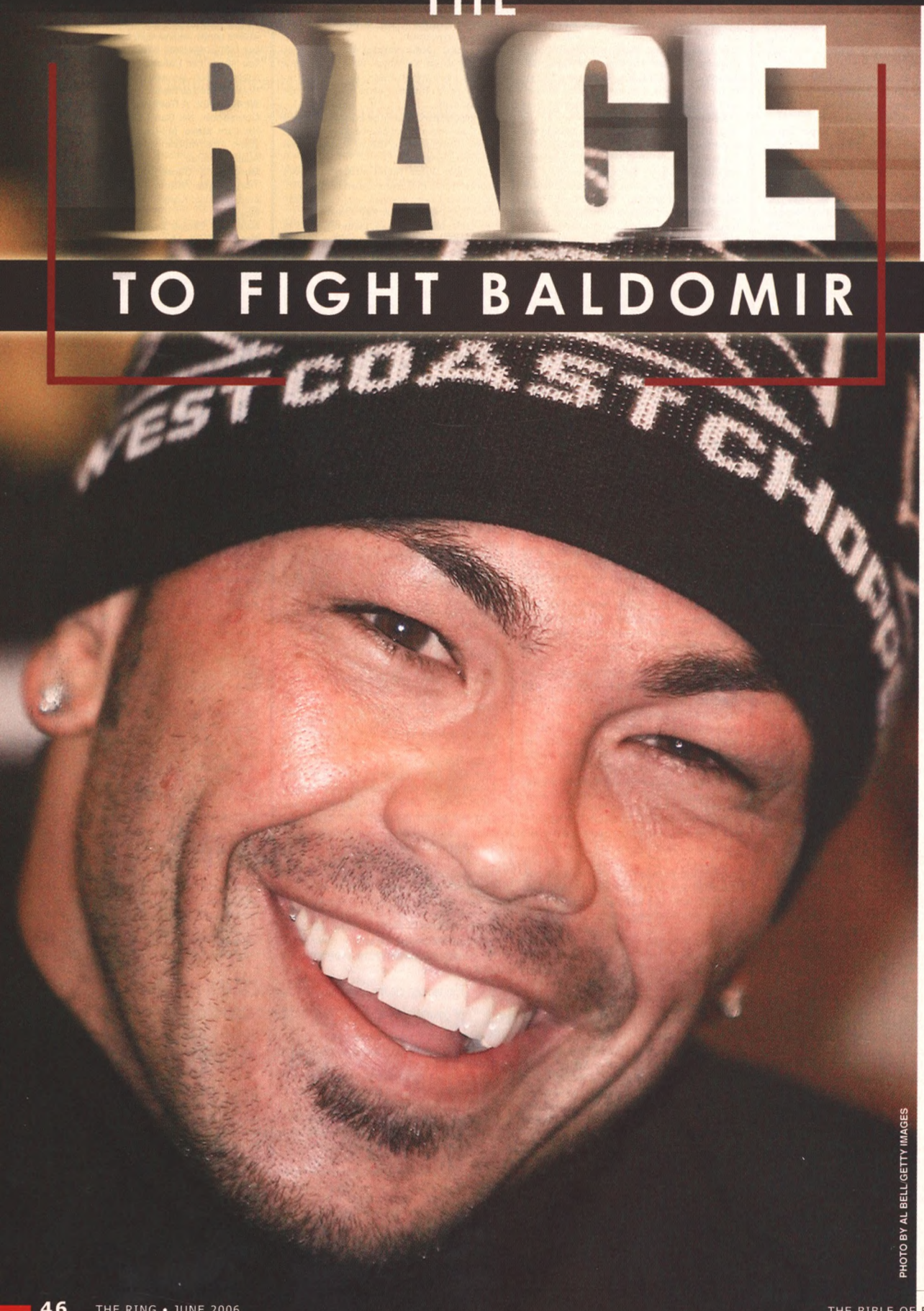

PHOTO BY AL BELL/GETTY IMAGES

Will Gatti Cross The Finish Line First?

Gatti has an excellent reason to look happy (left) after getting his career moving forward again with an 11th-round knockout of previously undefeated Thomas Damgaard (above). The victory earned Gatti a spot in the 147-pound ratings and perhaps a shot at world champion Carlos Baldomir.

By David Mayo

"Maybe I understand some about having a fight. So you just remember who you are. You're the bulldog of Bergen and the pride of New Jersey. You're everybody's hope and you're your kids' hero. And you are the champion of my heart."

—Mae Braddock, to James J. Braddock, in *Cinderella Man*

Cinematic dressing-room schmaltz aside, the made-for-Hollywood boxing career of Arturo Gatti bears a fair number of similarities to James J. Braddock's, minus a few losses and one extended residence on skid row. How Gatti continues to rescue his career from the precipice, time and again, is based in a number of factors, including the factor of numbers. He has retained his loyal New Jersey base. He has the proven staying power to keep HBO interested, even after being on the receiving end of a Floyd Mayweather epic.

And the latest champion of New Jersey's heart somehow continues to find something within his own heart that few oth-

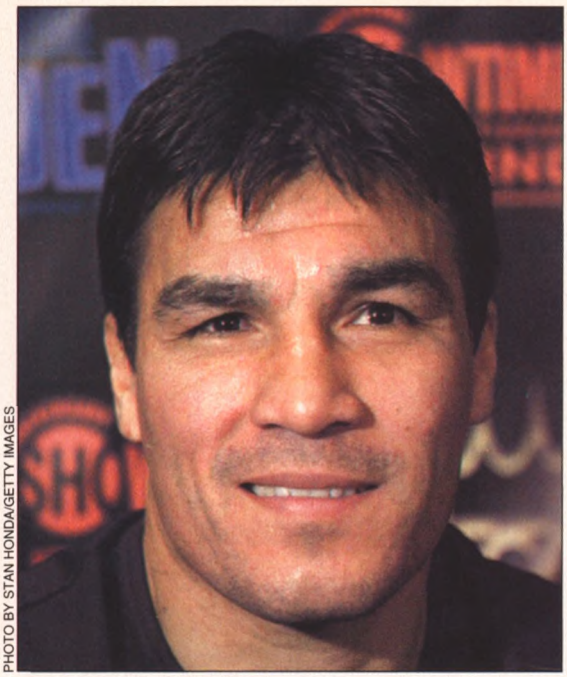

PHOTO BY STAN HONDA/GETTY IMAGES

A lot of fighters want to fight welterweight champion Baldomir (pictured), but his price was too high for several would-be challengers, including Floyd Mayweather. Gatti, however, is still eager and has the drawing power to make a bout with Baldomir financially feasible.

ers possess, during the dankest points in his working life. Gatti's career comebacks all are well-documented, after three consecutive losses and a well-satisfied nightlife craving threatened his career in 1998, after a lopsided stoppage loss to Oscar De La Hoya in 2001, and in two avenging efforts after a 2002 loss to Micky Ward.

Gatti rebuilt his life outside the ring. Trainer Buddy McGirt retooled his style inside it. Lacking either one, Gatti's career viability quite possibly would have ended some time ago, without much of the fairy tale now enveloping it. None of that mattered much against Mayweather, who administered a pound-for-pound whipping upon Gatti in June 2005, pushing himself to new career heights, and Gatti back into rebuilding mode.

The question, at age 33, was whether Gatti had another such effort in him, mentally or physically. McGirt might have refined some of the blood-and-guts style that endeared fans even while Gatti was on a 5-5 streak from 1998-'02, but any astute trainer would be concerned how a fighter comes back from so many ring wars. Beyond that, McGirt, one of boxing's savviest trainers, knew the psychological impact of a loss as embarrassing as the one to Mayweather could have. Those concerns were compounded by the decision, arrived at independently but mutually by both Gatti and Mayweather, to abandon the 140-pound division and move to welterweight after their fight.

Regardless of what Gatti has left, no one wants to see a repeat of last June, so winning the welterweight championship, if Mayweather ever latched onto it, is a pipe dream.

"That was a bad night for everyone, but most of all Arturo," McGirt said of the Mayweather fight, which the trainer stopped after six non-competitive rounds. "I wasn't really concerned about the physical effects, because he underwent some brain tests and an MRI before he got back in the gym, and they gave him a clean bill of health. But you watch everything a little differently after something like that. You're looking for any sign that the fire isn't there anymore."

What has happened since Mayweather-Gatti could twist the annals

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

In an ironic twist, Mayweather, pictured on his way to a sixth-round TKO of Gatti in June 2005, is now fighting for a bogus version of the welterweight title, while Gatti is closing in on a crack at the real champion. Gatti's ability to reinvent himself is one of the keys to his longevity.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Although he went toe-to-toe with Damgaard a couple of times, Gatti avoided serious punishment by utilizing his speed and boxing skills. Fighting at 147 pounds was also a big plus, as Gatti didn't have to drain himself making weight.

of boxing history not quite the same way as Braddock's unlikely riches-to-rags-to-riches upset of Max Baer for the heavyweight title in 1935, but more in a fashion indicative of money's modern-day pervasiveness over legitimate championship pursuits.

Mayweather moved to welterweight, stopped Sharmba Mitchell, had a title fight all set up against undisputed champion Zab Judah, and then was stunned to watch Judah lose what was perceived as a tuneup defense to the 42-9-6 (12) Carlos Baldomir in January.

Gatti, meantime, idled for seven months after the Mayweather fight, returned January 28, and dominated a little-known but previously undefeated 34-year-old Dane named Thomas Damgaard. Damgaard had former Mike Tyson opponent Brian Nielsen working his corner, as if to underscore the living testaments they provide to the record-building aptitude of Danish promoter Mogens Palle.

Mayweather engaged in talks with Baldomir about fighting for the welterweight title, deemed the little-known champion from Argentina as overaggressive in purse negotiations, and decided to move forward with his April 8 fight against Judah.

Gatti also engaged in talks with Baldomir and, at press time, had an inside track to beat Mayweather to a welterweight title shot. Oh, the smart guys at the IBF, the organization recently under federal monitoring for selling ratings, used Baldomir's refusal to pay its sanctioning fee for the Judah fight as its basis for not stripping Judah.

But THE RING and linear champion at 147 pounds was established in early-January when Judah's shameful performance against Baldomir strongly suggested insufficient preparation, and undoubtedly left him as a bogus title claimant. On the other hand, beating Judah made a champion out of Baldomir, who, by all accounts of all parties dealing with him, is trying to cash in big on his own Braddock-like championship ascent, with only a handful of opponents suited to that end.

One is Mayweather, who already dismissed Baldomir's asking price as too high. Another is Oscar De La Hoya, the reluctant ex-champion who doesn't always make his fighting intentions clear but could create a windfall for both himself and Baldomir and make Mayweather twist in the wind in the process, two of "The Golden Boy's" favorite fistic tricks.

The third fighter whose profit-margin appeal falls within Baldomir's target range is Gatti.

At press time, Baldomir's plan for a first defense was unclear, although he is quickly learning that without the push of television networks or the backing of public belief in his reign, his immediate bankability relies on his willingness to share with a marketable opponent. Mayweather proved out of financial range. De La Hoya potentially could generate enough revenue to make the fight attractive to Baldomir

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despite the slanted purse split.

And then there is Gatti, who underwent a relatively simple operation to repair a torn ligament in his right hand less than two weeks after beating Damgaard and was expected to resume training by late-March for an as-yet-unscheduled summer fight.

With Mayweather fighting Judah in April and Ricky Hatton planning to fight an undetermined opponent in May, the pool of potential opponents who could produce Baldomir's desired payoff dwindles even more.

It leaves Gatti in an extraordinary position to fight for the welterweight title before more deserving opponents, based largely on his marketability and perhaps also his vulnerability. Of the potential opponents for Baldomir's first title defense, clearly none is more beatable than Gatti.

"For Baldomir to even think about fighting Gatti tells you what the title belts mean," Mayweather said. "There is no way Gatti can be the real welterweight champion as long as I'm at 147. Everyone knows what time it is with me and Gatti. So Gatti's only chance to win the welterweight title is to pick up Baldomir's scraps before someone else does.

"Public demand determines fights. The public isn't demanding Floyd Mayweather against Baldomir, because no one knows Baldomir. Some people don't think Zab deserves to fight me, but that's the business of boxing. Did Erik Morales deserve the [second] Pacquiao fight? No, really Zahir Raheem did. But that's the business of boxing. If Gatti beats Baldomir, will there be a rematch between me and Gatti? No, because there's no public demand, and the business of boxing means more than the titles."

That's the unique thing about Gatti, whose career has seen more crests and valleys than Braddock's stock portfolio in the 1920s: He makes good business sense for any opponent, seemingly regardless of how many hits his 40-7 (31) record takes.

The latest evidence was another packed house of 11,568 at Atlantic City Boardwalk Hall for Gatti's thorough destruction of the 37-1 (27) Damgaard, who never had fought outside Denmark.

Damgaard fought like exactly what he was, a brave guy with a propped-up record doing whatever he could to parlay one payday into two, though he achieved little against Gatti before a staggering right hand prompted referee Lindsey Page Jr. to stop the fight at 2:54 of the 11th round.

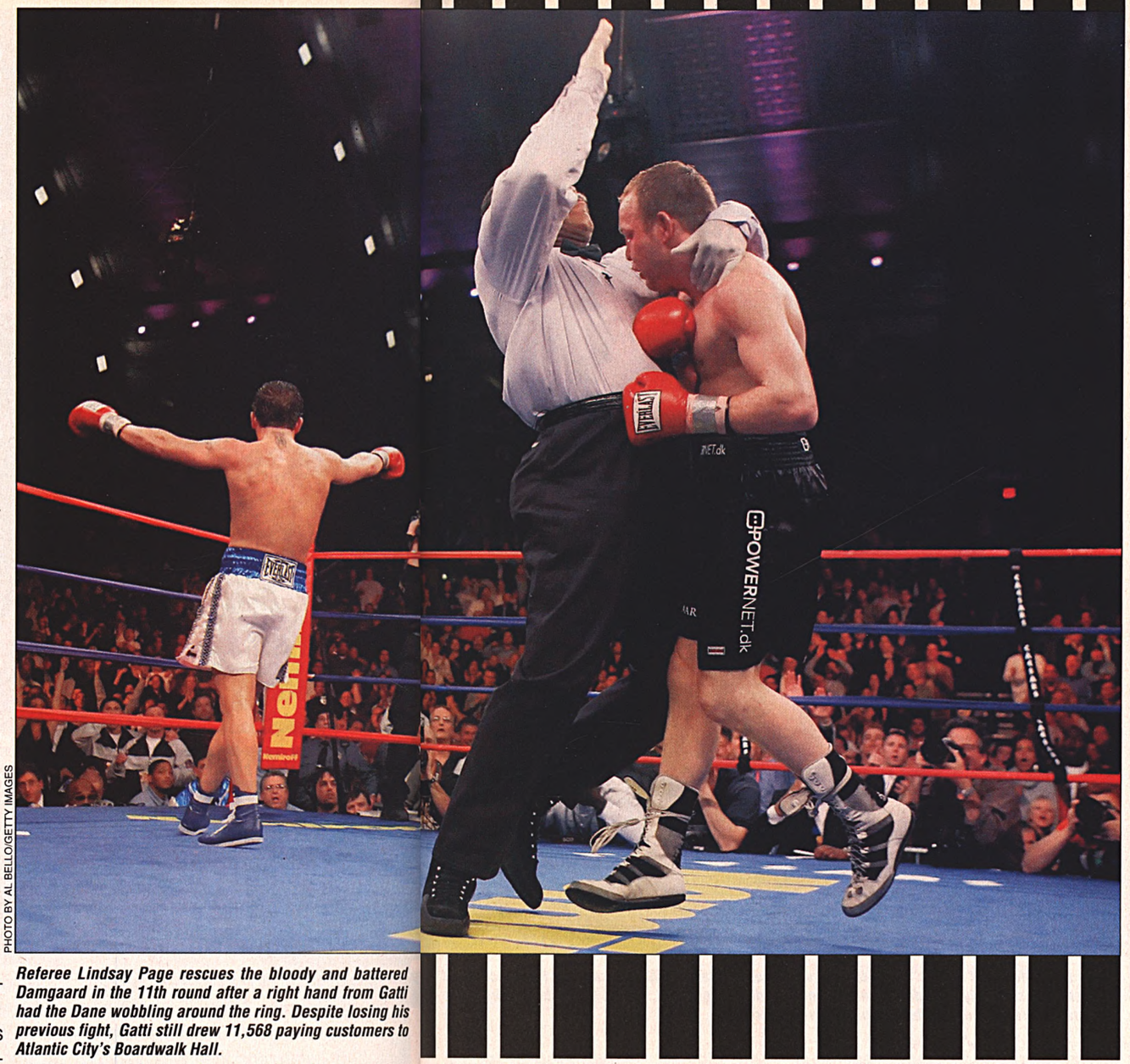

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Referee Lindsay Page rescues the bloody and battered Damgaard in the 11th round after a right hand from Gatti had the Dane wobbling around the ring. Despite losing his previous fight, Gatti still drew 11,568 paying customers to Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall.

Suddenly, the crestfallen faces surrounding Gatti after the humbling loss to Mayweather were gone. Main Events, the New Jersey-based promotional company for whom Gatti is the standard-bearer, was back in business in a big way. So was big-time boxing in Atlantic City.

One victory over a handpicked opponent, against whom Gatti's options were to look impressive or retire, managed it all. He won virtually every round, and then rode the wave of restoration to championship demand.

"I plan on having a few more years in boxing. I'm not done with this game yet. I had one bad night against the best fighter in the world. I wasn't the first, and I won't be the last," Gatti said. "But that's in the past. What's in the future for me is another world championship. I don't question Baldomir's abilities. I don't care why he couldn't make a deal with Mayweather, although I can understand it after everything we went through with making the [Mayweather-Gatti] fight. It's just a matter of timing and money with me and Baldomir. We both want the fight,

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and I believe it's going to get done."

McGirt, whose habit upon telling a fighter to retire is to smoke a cigar with him, had a couple of stogies at the ready in Atlantic City. He fully intended to advise Gatti to retire if the Damgaard fight went sour.

Gatti would not have required much convincing. He said he planned to retire if he performed poorly in his comeback. Despite the copious prefight predictions that he could not compete with Mayweather, he said the realization of their accuracy was "heart-breaking." He said he sensed that he had let down his fans and created doubt among them for his inability to turn a boxing match into physical chaos.

"It was hard for me after that," Gatti said. "I know people didn't think I'd be back. It wasn't that they didn't want me to make it back. They just didn't know how to react to me losing like that."

Questions about Gatti's own response soon were laid to rest. McGirt's early concerns in the gym were eased. The retirement cigar he brought for Gatti remained in its wrapper.

The champion of New Jersey's heart will get sterner tests than Damgaard during his latest career resurrection, quite possibly while trying to win the welterweight championship against Baldomir this summer. While those negotiations might constitute line-jumping, it is undeniable that Judah had his chance in the ring to do something about Baldomir's title reign and failed, and Mayweather had his chance in contract talks to reach a deal to end his title reign, but declined.

While Mayweather has asserted his superiority over Gatti, championships remain lineage-based, and the easy-to-hit new welterweight champion makes an attractive target for anyone in the 147-pound range. It could be simply a matter of who gets there first.

Gatti, with his career back on track and his once-gaunt features fleshier at his new weight, is willing and available. Now, in a period of about one year, it appears possible—perhaps even likely—that the latest "Cinderella Man" from New Jersey and boxing's cherished blood-and-guts warrior extraordinaire could go from a pay-per-view humiliation against the pound-for-pound king to outsprinting his conqueror to a title shot.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

HBO's Larry Merchant speaks with Gatti following the Damgaard fight, as manager Pat Lynch looks on. Gatti was seriously considering retirement if he didn't fight well, but all thoughts of hanging up his gloves were postponed after his impressive performance.

When McGirt initially began working with Gatti in 2002, he predicted this outcome, minus many of the peculiar curves in the journey. As unlikely as it seemed just months ago, that prophecy is near fulfillment.

"I told Arturo when I first started working with him that if he listened, he could become welterweight champion of the world," said McGirt, who held titles at 140 and 147 pounds during his own boxing career.

"Arturo only stayed at 140 as long as he did because he won the title," said McGirt. "So we kind of took a roundabout way there. But Arturo worked hard after the Mayweather fight. He showed me in camp and in the fight that he still has the hunger and this is the right weight for him. I told him he would be welterweight champion. That's still what I believe. People might doubt that. But anyone who counts out Arturo after all the ups and downs he's been through is crazy. The man is a force of nature." ■

David Mayo covers boxing for the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

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Even though Castillo landed his heavy left hook from time to time (opposite page) and came away with a unanimous 12-round decision in his match with Rolando Reyes (below), it was a boring fight that had the sparse crowd booing from the fifth round on.

TOUGH GUY FIGHTS UNDER THE CAUTION FLAG

CAN CASTILLO GET IT BACK IN GEAR FOR CORRALES?

PHOTOS BY CHRIS COZZONE

By Ivan Goldman

Put certain fighters together in the ring and you can count on fireworks. When the two fighters are Jose Luis Castillo and Diego "Chico" Corrales, what you get is more like a thermonuclear explosion. Virtually no one predicts anything less for their delayed rubber match, tentatively set for June 3.

In the meantime, some details of Castillo's easy decision victory over substitute Rolando Reyes on February 4 in El Paso, Texas, can provide clues about issues surrounding the third chapter of the great Castillo-Corrales trilogy. The fact that Castillo-Reyes was a snorer is not in doubt. The match prompted instant, unsolicited apologies from various people connected to it. Reyes, 26-4-2 (16), filled in for Corrales, who had injured his ribcage training, thus postponing Castillo-Corrales III.

Castillo, who said he'd be looking to finish his opponent early, ultimately settled for the sparring match that Reyes, 27, presented to him. The mediocre bout, televised on Showtime, may not have damaged the next Castillo-Corrales contest, but it certainly didn't help it any.

"Reyes was just trying to survive in there," said Bruce Trampler, lead matchmaker for Castillo's promoter, Top Rank. "It's hard to make a good fight when the opponent won't engage."

Gary Shaw, who promotes both Corrales and Reyes, agreed that Reyes was more interested in going the dis-

tance than pulling an upset. "My feeling is that whatever you do for a living," Shaw said, "whether you're fighting, promoting fighters, writing articles about fighters, or selling cars, you ought to put in your single best effort. I know Reyes is skilled, but I can't say that was his single best effort. It was disappointing to the fans who bought tickets and the people who watched it on Showtime."

Yet Shaw said the fight was also revealing. "I learned that Castillo can't draw fans by himself," he said. "He was only five minutes from the El Paso-Juarez border, and he couldn't pull in 2,000 fans." Clearly, Castillo's star power falls somewhere short of Oscar De La Hoya's. In 1998, when "The Golden boy" competed in the same city, 51,000 fans watched him stop barely known Frenchman Patrick Charpentier in the third round.

"Castillo may be a nice kid and a good fighter, but he's a long way from being a star," Shaw said. The meager attendance of 1,956, Shaw added, "also shoots down Bob Arum's theory that only Hispanic fighters can draw." Shaw's African-American fighter Jeff Lacy, he pointed out, routinely draws larger crowds, particularly when they compete in or around his respective hometown of St. Petersburg, Florida.

The incredible shrinking attendance in El Paso may even have cost the city the chance to host Castillo-Corrales III. Although both camps are clearly determined to tango, the details of the third fight are not set in stone.

"The match was originally cast as Castillo-Corrales III," rationalized Trampler. "When it became something else, you can't blame people for not going to see it. It was a patched-up show instead of the third fight of a major trilogy."

True, but ticket prices were cut substantially, and history shows that some fighters—De La Hoya, for example—can draw crowds even against barely credible opponents. Crossover stardom, the ability to pull in fans who don't normally follow boxing, eludes Castillo.

"It helps if you speak English," Shaw noted dryly. Actually, Castillo speaks and understands some English, which is apparent when he quarrels with Shaw. But he's well short of fluent.

Castillo, 32, who used to spar with Mexican icon Julio Cesar Chavez, clearly hopes to take on some of his aura. It's no accident that Castillo and his entourage made their way up to the ring wearing Chavez-like red headbands and accompanied by the fighter's photogenic son. Castillo's ring style also bears some resemblance to Chavez'. He makes similar moves, has similar firepower, loves to go to the body, and tends, like his mentor, not to waste punches.

But Mexican and Mexican-American fans would consider it blasphemy to boo Chavez, who once drew more than 100,000 fans for a fight in Mexico City. Castillo and Reyes were booed in earnest starting in the fifth round and every round thereafter.

Mexican fans have been presented with other potential successors to Chavez' aura—Ricardo Lopez, Erik Morales, and Marco Antonio Barrera. With Lopez retired, Morales apparently fading, and Castillo's star power short-circuited for the time being, Barrera is in the lead.

Star power has to do with the chemistry between fighter and fans, but it's no science. Felix "Tito" Trinidad and Mike Tyson had it, and De La Hoya, who hasn't fought since Bernard Hopkins stopped him in September 2004, still has it. Mexican featherweight Juan Manuel Marquez, whose last scheduled fight was for a relatively small purse on the island of Borneo, clearly does not. But it would be a mistake to assume Castillo can't possibly acquire it. Discount his less-than-stellar effort against Reyes, and you see he's still improving as a fighter.

But although the Castillo-Corrales rivalry is already a legend, the controversy of the first two fights lives on. The first fight, in May 2005, universally recognized as one of the greatest fights ever, ended when Corrales stopped Castillo in round 10, but only after Corrales gained time to recuperate from two consecutive knockdowns by twice spitting out his mouthpiece earlier in the round.

In the October rematch, Castillo weighed in at 138½ pounds, 3½ pounds over the lightweight limit. Clues abound that at some point he decided not to even try to make weight. One of his handlers was caught trying to manipulate the scale. Corrales, who's taller than most junior middleweights, made 135 at the weigh-in the day before the fight, but he looked drained and unable to take Castillo's shots. He was busted up badly when Castillo kayoed him with a beautiful left hook in round four.

Against Reyes, Castillo was supposed to come in at no more than 138, and he weighed that exactly, as did Reyes. "I don't believe Castillo can make 135 pounds," Shaw said afterward. "It makes me want to go back to the drawing board and talk to Diego and his people about it." If the two sides agree upon a catch weight above lightweight, that would have a certain logic, since both fighters have a terrible time getting down to 135. They both weighed at least

Castillo did his best work when he got inside and pounded Reyes' body. It was enough to win most rounds, but Castillo was penalized a point in the seventh round for hitting below the belt.

Early in the fight, Reyes drilled Castillo with a couple of sharp right hands that might have convinced Castillo to do just enough to win without taking too many risks. On the other hand, Reyes never really tried very hard to follow up with more rights.

Castillo used his right sparingly, but did have success with it. Many observers felt that he could have stopped Reyes if he had launched a sustained attack, and his reluctance to do so certainly won't help sell any tickets to the rescheduled third fight with Corrales.

147 pounds the night of the second fight.

The weight limit for their next match would be up to the fighters, Trampler said. "As far as I know, Castillo is wiling to make 135," he said.

At lightweight, Corrales retained THE RING championship title and two alphabet belts because Castillo didn't make the lightweight limit in October. Contacted by THE RING, Corrales, 40-3 (33), said, "We're both having a hard time with the weight, but that's the nature of the business. I'm going to keep my belts. Lightweight is where I'm at."

Fighting for the titles, Shaw said, "is very important to the fighters, not the promoters." Trampler agreed that the fighters themselves set the weight limits. Said Top Rank publicist Lee Samuels: "I don't think the titles are a big deal to the fans."

Shaw vowed after the second fight that if Castillo doesn't hit the contract weight for the third match, he and his fighter will go straight back to the airport. But no financial penalties were built into the rubber match contract.

The Nevada commission fined Castillo $120,000 for not making weight in Fight II, splitting it with Corrales. With details not finalized, penalties could still be added for Fight III. Shaw, who promotes Manny Pacquiao, noted that for Morales-Pacquiao II, monster penalties were written into the weight clause. If either fighter came in just a fraction of a pound over the junior lightweight limit, he would have had to pay $250,000 to his opponent.

Corrales, 28, who grew up in Sacramento and now fights out of Las Vegas, said that although Reyes "did not give as good an effort as he could have, he did a lot of good things, and showed me some [Castillo] flaws." Corrales kept the flaws to himself,

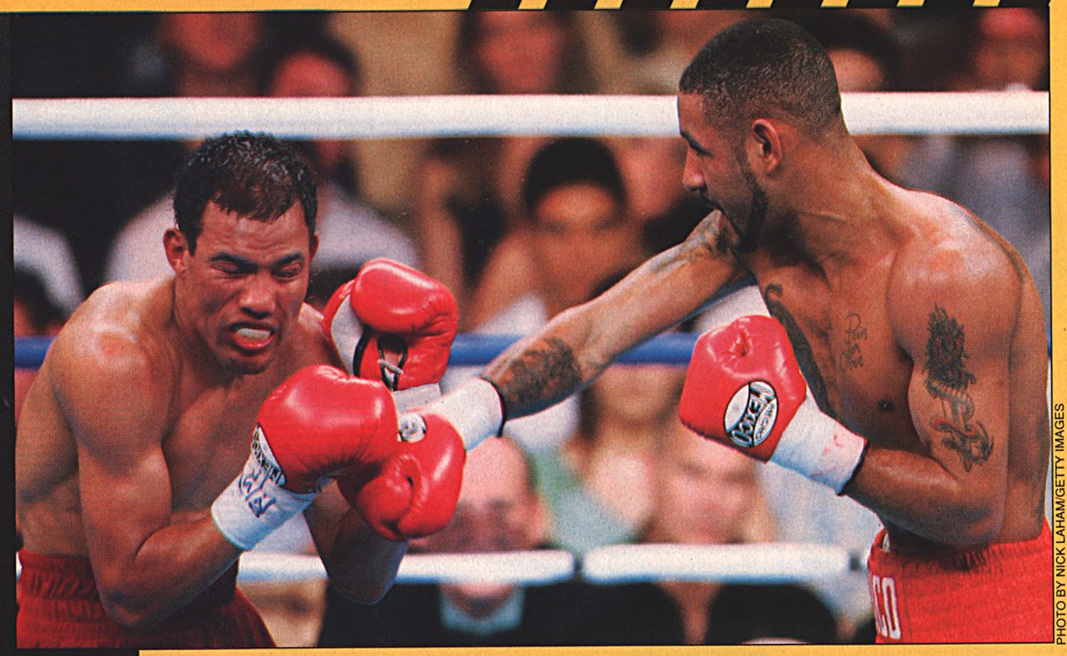

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Corrales nails Castillo with a right during their epic first encounter, which "Chico" won with a dramatic 10th-round TKO. Whether or not Corrales should be encouraged by Castillo's perfunctory performance against Reyes is a matter of debate.

hoping to reveal them to the world in their next contest.

Said Shaw: "I was surprised that Castillo wasn't strong enough to take out Reyes. He had him on the ropes several times and couldn't hurt him at all." That may be wishful thinking, but Castillo showed against Reyes, as he did against Corrales, that he has trouble eluding uppercuts. That can create serious trouble for an inside fighter like Castillo.

Both fighters started tentatively, but before the end of the first round, Castillo, 54-7-1 (47), managed to get Reyes in the corner and punish him to the body. In round two, Reyes did more backing up, and, in round three he managed to land a one-two. By round four, although he'd caught Castillo with an occasional shot, Reyes, who used to spar with Corrales, was behaving like a sparring partner.

In round seven, referee Laurence Cole, after issuing several warnings, deducted a point from Castillo for hitting low. Castillo did good work to the body once in a while, but not nearly enough to excite the crowd. Afterward, he blamed Reyes for refusing to engage. He also admitted he was wary of getting cut, which could have delayed Castillo-Corrales III once again. Reyes' corner tried to pump him up between rounds, but it was clear from his facial expression that he paid no attention. Toward the end, Castillo joked with his corner between rounds.

Judges Roger Hawkins, Jesse Reyes, and Gale Van Hoy scored it 116-111, 117-110, and 119-108, respectively, for Castillo. THE RING scored it 118-109.

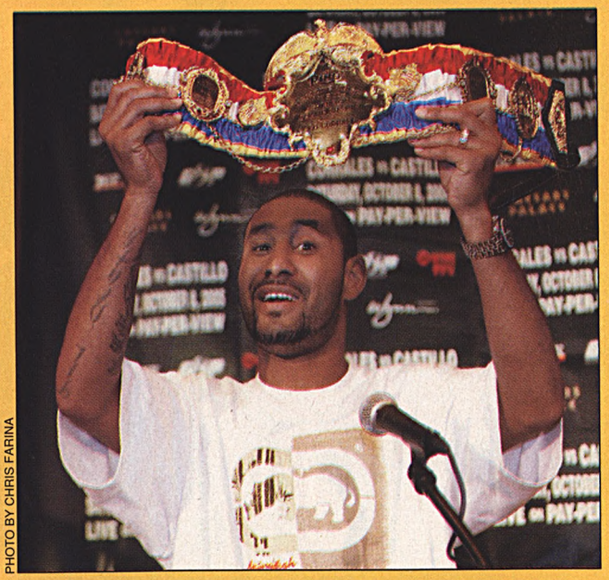

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Even though he also struggles to make 135 pounds, Corrales wants to keep the lightweight championship belt he won by beating Castillo in their first fight. Due to the fact that Castillo failed to make weight, the title wasn't at stake in their second encounter.

Castillo's performance was reminiscent of Bernard Hopkins and Roy Jones, who, particularly in the latter part of their careers, let their opponents survive as long as they didn't get too ambitious. Eventually, when they had to step it up, Hopkins and Jones no longer could.

It's not likely Castillo's descent into laziness will last, but if it does, that's good news for Corrales. ■

Ivan Goodman is THE RING's West Coast correspondent.

FROM THE EDGE OF DEATH TO A FIGHTING CHANCE

Boxing Puts One Of Its Own Back On Two Wheels

By Ted Lerner

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."
—Lao Tzu, sixth century B.C. Chinese philosopher

Standing inside the small, air-conditioned showroom of a Yamaha dealership in the southern Philippine town of Cagayan de Oro, Alvin Felicilda is hardly thinking about ancient Chinese philosophy. Instead, the 23-year-old quietly eyes his future—a shiny, brand new motorcycle that will soon have his name on it.

At a table off to the side, the store manager, along with New Zealand boxing referee and long-time Philippine resident Bruce McTavish, sort out the business, counting the money, organizing the paperwork. Of course, this isn't what Felicilda had dreamt of when he began boxing at the age of 16. Boxing was going to lead him and his large family out of crushing poverty and to some real money. Boxing would help him achieve his dream of becoming a world champion like his hero, Gerry Penalosa.

Despite a rough start, he had made progress, eventually winning the Philippine bantamweight title. Then, in November 2003, it all went terribly wrong when Felicilda nearly died from a serious brain injury suffered in a fierce Oriental-Pacific Boxing Federation (OPBF) title match in Kobe, Japan.

But standing in the Yamaha dealership waiting to affix his signature to the paperwork, it is obvious by his quiet nervousness, the flicker in his eyes, that Felicilda knows he is blessed—by circumstances, by luck, by the fact that there are some people in boxing who do care about a fighter even when he's down and out. And he can see clearly that he is about to reclaim some of his life, or at least get a chance at it. That's all you can ask for after nearly dying, just simple things. Just a chance. And the motorcycle is that chance.

Chances are few in the village of Malugan, a small farming community in the southern Philippine province of Misamis Oriental, Mindanao, where extreme poverty stalks the landscape. Felicilda's father ekes out a living as a tenant farmer growing corn, while his mother takes care of the brood of nine children. The family is crammed into a simple, three-room house, with no electricity and no running water.

In some ways Felicilda's story mirrors Mindanao's most famous boxer, Manny Pacquiao, who grew up three hours away in General Santos City. Like Pacquiao, Felicilda dropped out of school in the sixth grade and soon found work in a local bakery. It just so happened that the owner of the bakery had a small boxing stable, where

PHOTO BY TED LERNER

A beaming Alvin Felicilda poses with his new motorcycle and shakes hands with Bruce McTavish, who was instrumental in obtaining the vehicle for the former Filipino fighter (above). That's Leonil Lazarito, Felicilda's manager, standing between them. Back in 2003, Felicilda was fighting for his life in a Japanese hospital (inset) after suffering a brain injury.

Felicilda developed a liking for the sport. Felicilda eventually found his way to the stable of one of Mindanao's largest managers and promoters, Leonil Lazarito, a local businessman and farmer who lives three hours away in the rural farming community of Bukidnon.

By any standards in professional boxing, Lazarito could be considered a saint of a man. He started managing fighters in 1988, and his stable has at times numbered more than 50 young men. Lazarito takes in any kid who comes knocking on his door, houses them, feeds them three meals a day, trains them, tries to find them fights, and even helps them to find work should they decide to leave the sport. Without exception, all the kids are desperately poor. Sometimes it's the kids' parents who come to him, pleading with Lazarito to take their son and turn him into a boxer, because they don't know any other way out of the grinding, persistent poverty.

McTavish counts the money obtained to purchase Felicilda's motorcycle (above), and then Felicilda signs the paperwork that makes it officially his (below).

PHOTOS BY TED LERNER

"Whoever knocks on my door, I accept," Lazarito said. "I do it for the love of boxing. But I always explain to them that the sport is brutal. They say they don't care. They have no choice."

Although Lazarito has seen streams of fighters pass before his eyes, he noticed a little something special in the youngster from Malugan.

"I knew that if Alvin will be developed, he can become a champion," he said. "He had a strong punch. He was one of my best boxers."

"I dreamt of being a champion," Felicilda said. "I wanted to emulate the Philippine champions. I wanted to make money."

As is typical in the poorer parts of Asia, he was moved quickly, and often fought abroad under impossible conditions. Not surprisingly, the defeats mounted. In only his fourth fight, Felicilda fought a 10-rounder in Thailand, losing a decision. Two fights later, he went the distance and lost to current WBC flyweight titleholder Pongsaklek Wonjongkam in a 10-round non-title fight. Then, in his 14th fight, with a record of 4-8-1 (3), but obviously battle hardened, he won the Philippine bantamweight title by knocking out Johnny Lear.

Nobody back in Malugan saw the fight because nobody had a television. But people in the nearby bigger town of El Salvador saw the bout on TV and relayed the news to Felicilda's family. It was the biggest thing anyone in that area had ever accomplished and Felicilda became an instant hero.

Three months later, on November 9, 2003, Felicilda traveled to Kobe, Japan, to challenge current WBC bantamweight titlist Hozumi Hasegawa for the OPBF bantamweight belt. Felicilda went down once in the third, then again in the fifth. Lazarito, who was in the corner, said that although the fight was fairly one-sided, he didn't notice anything particularly wrong with his ward. But after Felicilda absorbed some heavy blows in the eighth and ninth rounds, Lazarita decided it wasn't worth continuing and stopped it in the corner before the start of the 10th.

For two minutes Felicilda paced around in the ring awaiting the official decision. He says now he never felt anything overtly wrong. But suddenly he slumped over and collapsed. Japanese boxing officials rushed Felicilda to the hospital, where within minutes of examining him, doctors decided they had to operate. Felicilda's brain was swelling fast, they said, and if they didn't open up the skull to relieve the pressure, the youngster from Mindanao was in danger of dying right then and there.

Working quickly, doctors proceeded to remove a portion of the left side of Felicilda's skull, a round piece the size of a drink coaster and about a half an inch thick. Fortunately, the operation went well.

"Right after the surgery, the doctor told me he'd be okay," Lazarito said. Felicilda woke up three days later. "I asked him questions. 'What's my name? What's your name?' Right there I knew he was able to maintain his short-term and long-term memory."

Back home in Malugan, the family heard by portable radio that a Filipino boxer fighting in Japan had been injured in a fight and was now in a Japanese hospital fighting for his life. Cut off from the outside world because of their location and poverty, all they could do was pray.

Despite the successful surgery, Felicilda was not out of danger yet. He had to remain in the hospital for a total of 45 days, most of it with his hands tied, lest he accidentally touch the gap in his skull. Then there was the question of who would cover the hefty expenses.

Japanese boxing officials took care of all the bills for the initial operation. But the hospital needed an additional $15,000 to close the hole in Felicilda's skull with a synthetic covering, followed by a skin graft. Lazarito, who had brought many fighters to Japan before and had lots of contacts, made some calls, and within a day was able to come up with the money.

When Felicilda returned to the Philippines, he immediately headed south to visit his family. Overjoyed, the family threw a big party, and even roasted a pig. But getting home in one piece was just the first hurdle.

PHOTO BY TED LERNER

Lazarito examines the piece of skull that was removed from Felicilda's head during the operation that saved the boxer's life. The hole in Felicilda's head is now filled with a synthetic covering.

"Alvin needed guidance," Lazarito said. "He couldn't do manual jobs. He can't carry heavy things."

The Philippine government doesn't have a fund for down and out boxers, and without an education and the inability to do manual labor, Felicilda's future looked bleak at best. Again, Lazarito came to the rescue.

Lazarito contacted OPBF President Frank Quill in Australia and asked for assistance. Quill, through McTavish, opened up a bank account for Felicilda and allowed the former fighter to withdraw $100 a month through an ATM card. Felicilda used the monthly stipend to buy food, visit a psychiatrist, and even help out his sister, who had asked for some funds to travel abroad for work.

After regaining his strength, Felicilda started using some of the money to rent a tricycle cab and try his luck on the streets of the regional capital, Cagayan de Oro. Tricycles, which are basically motorcycles with a passenger cab welded onto its frame, are cheap and common forms of transportation throughout the Philippines. In Cagayan de Oro, a tricycle driver earns just 10 cents a passenger, per kilometer. It's a job that provides subsistence living, perhaps a little more if the driver is lucky.

Lazarito, who to this day still keeps the circular piece of Felicilda's skull as a memento, monitored Felicilda to make sure riding a motorcycle all day didn't harm him. Although he was able to handle the rigors of plying the busy city streets, the economics of the job didn't add up. Felicilda had to rent the

PHOTO BY TED LERNER

Felicilda stands in front of a tricycle similar to the one that has been built to attach to his motorcycle. Thanks to the generosity of a small band of compassionate boxing people, he will now have a far better chance of providing a decent living for himself and his family.

tricycle for $4 a day. At most he grossed $6 and pocketed just $2.

"Sometimes he even loses," Lazarito said. "He doesn't even make his money back, so I have to pay. But what I'm after is that he learns to make a living."

Sensing an opportunity to help Felicilda help himself, Lazarito got back in touch with the OPBF's Quill and told him about Felicilda's new line of work. Maybe, Lazarito queried, the OPBF could buy Alvin a tricycle and give him a means of livelihood.

Quill readily agreed. Although the regional organization barely keeps afloat, Quill cobbled together some money and wired it to McTavish in the Philippines. McTavish withdrew the remaining funds from Felicilda's trust account, and all together it was enough to cover the $2,000 bill for the brand new tricycle. It is easily the most expensive item Felicilda or anyone from his family has ever owned.

"For a guy from his background, this is like a dream come true," said Salven Lagumbay, a Filipino boxing writer who flew in from Manila to witness the turnover. "If it had been another manager with no connections in Japan, there would have been no replacement with a graft. If this had been Indonesia, Thailand, or the Philippines, Alvin might be dead."

After quietly affixing his signature on the title, Felicilda posed for pictures with Lazarito and McTavish, and then the entire party drove across town to the metal shop, which would build Felicilda's cab on to his new motorcycle (with the letters OPBF painted on the back, of course). Within one month, with the guidance of Lazarito, he would be out on the streets running his own business and earning a living.

When asked how he felt about his new business and if he had any regrets that boxing didn't turn out the way he had hoped, Felicilda responded with a quote that would make any Chinese philosopher nod his head in approval. For here was a poor and simple young man who obviously realized the value of both the gift of life and livelihood.

"I'm overjoyed and thankful to God that I'm normal, that my speech has been restored," the reserved and humbled Felicilda said. "I appreciate my life more now. I'm very thankful."

The reservation didn't last long, however.

"Alvin was very shy yesterday," Lazarito said the following day. "But when we get back to my house, he shouted 'I can't believe I have a new tricycle!' and he leaped into my arms. He was very happy." ■

Ted Lerner is THE RING's Philippines correspondent.

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LITZAU'S

LIFE ON THE EDGE

MORE THAN JUST A NUTCASE?

By Eric Raskin
PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Eddie Van Halen's fingers begin tickling the ivories. Soon the drums kick in. Then the pace picks up, and the guitar and bass follow. The crowd rises to its feet. And Jason Litzau emerges, throwing punches in the air, bopping his head up and down, his eyes conveying a burning urge to dish out a beating. Cue Sammy Hagar's voice.

Don't wanna wait 'til tomorrow,
Why put it off another day?
One more walk through problems,
*Build up, and stand in our way**

For Litzau's fight against Carlos Contreras on the undercard of Arturo Gatti-Thomas Damgaard at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall in January, Litzau chose the song "Right Now" to accompany his ring entrance. He's 22 years old. He has his whole career ahead of him, and everybody's buzzing about what a bright future he has. But Litzau is living in the moment. He's loving life—right now.

Litzau is one of those kids from the Ritalin generation who must have been slipped the sugar-pill placebo every day instead. He's beyond hyper. He's almost like Beavis when he used to go into his "Great Cornholio" routine. Litzau speaks mostly in partial sentences because before he finishes one sentence, his mind has already moved on to the next one. He finishes thoughts by yelling "Bap! Bap!" and throwing eight-punch combinations in the air. He almost sounds like he's rapping when he talks. You think you have his undivided attention one second—then he cuts you off mid-sentence to scream excitedly at someone he's just noticed on the far side of the room.

As THE RING tried to interview Litzau in his dressing room following his sixth-round TKO of Contreras, we had to wonder if perhaps we were seeing a more manic version of his personality on account of the fact that he was just a few minutes removed from a triumphant performance in the ring. Or could it possibly be that he's this outrageously energetic all the time?

"Oh yeah, this is how I really am. High on life, baby. You couldn't be higher on life than me," Litzau

Litzau on the attack against Carlos Contreras. The fight was the chief supporting bout on the Arturo Gatti-Thomas Damgaard card in Atlantic City and was televised by HBO prior to the main event. Gatti is one of Litzau's fistic heroes.

responded. Then he looked over toward his trainer, Bob Van Syckle, and raised his voice. "Bob, am I a nutcase? Am I a nutcase, Bob? ... I'm a f___in' nutcase."

This nutcase might just be a superstar in the making. Take a look at what legendary trainer, manager, and HBO boxing analyst Emanuel Steward had to say about him after Litzau elevated his record to 17-0 (15) with the win over Contreras:

"Jason seems to have everything. He's got boxing skills, he's got some crazy, wild street stuff in him, and he *loves* what he's doing. He enjoys beating up people. He's a little sick, you know.

"He's gonna bring excitement that we haven't seen in the featherweight division since Naseem Hamed."

As easy at it appears for Litzau in the ring, the first 22 years of life were anything but. He and his older brother, Allen, who's also a pro fighter now, grew up with an alcoholic mother and an abusive stepfather, and it reached the point that, when they were 10 and 11 years old, Jason and Allen ran away in the middle of the night—to go live with a biological father who had drug problems. They've known what it's like to struggle to find the money to survive, they've known what it's like to struggle to keep a roof over their heads. They've been surrounded by drug abuse, and they've watched nearly all of the people who were close to them end up in jail. Somehow, through it all, the Litzaus stayed on the right path, remaining motivated, alcohol-free, and drug-free. It must be that "high on life" thing kicking in.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

As this photograph shows, Litzau knows how to box on the outside and pile up points with his jab. But he'd much rather go toe-to-toe, a habit that endears him to the fans, though sometimes causes his promotional team considerable anxiety.

Contreras drills Litzau with a right hand. "The American Boy" is eager to please the fans and loves to mix it up, which can be hazardous. So far, however, Litzau has survived a few rocky moments to remain unbeaten in 17 pro outings.

Jason Litzau began boxing at age 11, compiled a 125-10 amateur record, and turned pro at age 19. He quickly caught the eye of hardcore fans in a couple of early appearances on ESPN2. This skinny white kid from St. Paul, Minnesota, had awesome reflexes, fast hands, and devastating punching power. Lots of prospects defeat the usual suspects put in front of them. Not many prospects make you take notice the way the flashy Litzau did. He raced to a 14-0 (14) record, and, in early-2005, Main Events signed him to a promotional contract.

Then things got scary. In his first TV main event, a *Friday Night Fights* headliner on July 15, 2005, Litzau got his first taste of adversity in the professional prizefighting ring.

John Nolasco, a Dominican junior lightweight with a 15-3-4 (6) record and a penchant for defeating—or at least earning hard-luck draws against—favored prospects, was supposed to be Litzau's toughest test. But he wasn't supposed to be *this* tough. Litzau, who's quick and agile enough to get away with holding his hands at his waist and pulling straight back against most opponents, wasn't able to get away with it against Nolasco. Litzau got caught with a hard left hook in the third, and got buckled by another one in the sixth. Those were moments that had the folks at Main Events holding their breath. But they were nothing compared to what happened in the seventh round. Nolasco scored with another left hook to the chin with about 30 seconds to go in the round, and "The American Boy" crashed hard, looking completely out of it as blood flowed from his nose. Through pure instinct, desire, and conditioning, Litzau got up and survived the round.

One of the best fights of 2005 was unfolding, and Litzau refused to come out on the losing end, willing his way to a rally over the final three rounds. When

Litzau distorts Contreras' face with a left shortly before stopping him in the sixth round. Although he's tallied 15 knockouts, Litzau is more of a volume puncher than one-punch kayo artist. He has, however, been extended the full distance in two of his last three bouts.

the scores were added up, he kept his unbeaten record intact with a split decision—95-94 on two cards, 94-95 on the third.

"He learned from that," trainer Van Syckle reflected. "He was a little bit too playful in that fight. So he learned not to play so much. His chin is good, he got up, and he finished stronger than he had been throughout the whole fight."

Litzau's two wins since have been considerably less stressful. He was forced to go the distance again by journeyman Miguel Angel Munguia last November, but it was a comfortable win, as Litzau won nine of the 10 rounds. And against Contreras—a smaller man whose best days were behind him, but a fighter who had fought for major titles in the past and was by far Litzau's most seasoned opponent—the youngster shined.

Weighing 128 pounds (the 5'10" Litzau says he can be either a featherweight or a junior light), Litzau dominated virtually every second of the scheduled 10-rounder. His long jab blinded Contreras for the straight right hand. Left hooks to the head and hard rights to the ribs followed. Litzau was much too fast and much too aggressive, and the Mexican had no answers. By round two, Litzau was putting on a show, playing to the crowd without ever putting himself in danger. His hands dropped to his sides. He threw an uppercut from much too far away, but landed it anyway. He made Contreras cover up just by feinting.

By the sixth, Litzau was measuring his 29-year-old foe for the right hand, setting up his distance and snapping Contreras' head back repeatedly. The punishment was getting worse and worse, and with the outcome in no doubt whatsoever, referee Mike Ortega jumped in and saved the tough Contreras at 1:17 of the round.

"He did everything I've been asking for. He trained so hard, he was in great shape, he was barely breathing in there, and he broke the guy down," Van Syckle said after the fight. "This guy was a very, very tough opponent, been in with two world champions. He said that he was going to knock out Jay, and blah blah blah, all that kind of stuff, and Jay kept his calm, broke him down, wore him down, figured him out. The defense was beautiful today."

Ah, the defense. Yes, it was beautiful—against an opponent who was too slow to take advantage of any openings. Whether it's going to ultimately prove beautiful or hideous remains to be seen. But Steward thinks Litzau "has the style to get away with it," and Van Syckle is similarly unconcerned.

"He's been doing it his whole career, in the same vein of a Sugar Ray Leonard or Muhammad Ali. It's just something that he can do because, thank God, he has the natural radar," Van Syckle said. "In this game, you're gonna get hit, no matter whether you have your hands up. Contreras had his hands up, right? Who won the fight? The guy had his hands up the entire fight and got his butt kicked.

"Jason's aware of what he's doing. He's now watching the other guy, so

The free-swinging Litzau poses with defensive genius Pernell Whitaker following the Contreras victory. Whitaker is working with Litzau's promoter, Main Events, but it's unlikely that "Sweet Pea's" influence will change The American Boy's fan-friendly style.

he'll pull his head out at the last minute. Depending on the opponent, he can change styles."

Whereas the Nolasco fight might have scared a lot of fighters and their trainers into adopting a safer style, Litzau loves walking the tightrope the way he does, and he makes no apologies for it.

"I mix it up, because that's what it's about. I want to sell tickets," Litzau said. "I could have just boxed the kid and been real careful, but I give the crowd a show. I want people to come see me get knocked down, get up, knock him down, get up, and that's what I'm doing, I'm an entertainer. Damn near like a WWE wrestler, but for *real*."

Damn near like someone else too: the guy who headlined this show at Boardwalk Hall, Arturo Gatti. Between the Nolasco fight, the union with Main Events, and the white skin, it was inevitable that people begin comparing Litzau with Gatti.

You've probably heard or read those comparisons somewhere already. What you likely don't realize is that Litzau himself is the one who first started floating them out there.

"Since he was a kid, he just loved the way Gatti would get hit and come back and retaliate," Van Syckle said. "He loved the guy's heart. He'd go crazy when he saw Gatti fight. He's not afraid to get knocked down, like most guys who are always going to be so careful. He knows that to excite the crowd, to get people to turn on their TVs and watch, he knows he's got to take some chances. The one thing he's not afraid to do is take calculated risks to excite the fans."

Not everybody is crazy about the comparisons to the greatest action fighter of the last couple of decades. Main Events Vice President Carl Moretti certainly wouldn't mind seeing Litzau develop into the next Gatti, hence his featuring him in front of Gatti's loyal fans. But as with any "The Next So-And-So" tag, he knows how difficult it can be to live up to that kind of hype.

"That's too much to ask of anybody, to call him the next Gatti," Moretti said. "What I like about him is that he wants to be somebody who's liked by everybody and gives great efforts and great fights every time out—that part of it I don't mind. But we don't need Fight of the Years with kids that are just coming up. We don't need that."

Speak for yourself, Carl. Fights like Litzau-Nolasco are just fine by us. Still, Moretti is going to take things at a moderate pace. He expects Litzau to fight once in April or May, and then again in June or July—probably on the undercard of Gatti-Carlos Baldomir, if that fight gets signed. Moretti views 2006 as a year of development, and 2007 as a year for Litzau to start making his move.

But Litzau has no interest in talking about any of that. Ask him who he wants to fight next or when he wants to fight next, and he'll tell you to talk to Main Events. He can't be concerned with what's coming up a year, a month, or a week from now. Jason Litzau is wrapped up in right now.

And right now, Jason Litzau is one self-proclaimed "f___in' nutcase" who has the boxing world taking notice. Emanuel Steward says he can go all the way. We say we'd at least like front-row seats to watch him try. ■

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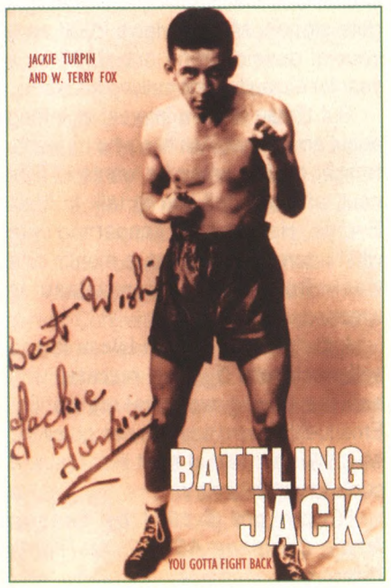
FIGHTING JACK LOOKS BACK

The Inside Story Of The Turpin Brothers

By Brian Doogan

The Polo Grounds were filling up fast, and soon 61,370 people would be in their seats for the hottest ticket in town. Sugar Ray Robinson, fighting in the main event, had arrived early; the first bell for the world middleweight title bout was still two hours away. In his seat in the lower stand, A.J. Liebling, writing for *The New Yorker*, described this Sep-



The fighting Turpin brothers: Dick, Randy, and Jack pose for the press upon arrival in New York City for Randy's ill-fated rematch with Sugar Ray Robinson in 1951 (right). More than half-a-century later, Jack, the only surviving brother, co-authored a book (left) that details the brothers' lives and careers.

"Battling Jack," now 80 years old, is pictured in his garden with co-author W. Terry Fox, a university lecturer and writer. Together, they have created a unique look back at a bygone time when a trio of multiracial brothers changed the face of British boxing.

tember evening in the Big Apple as "sweating hot."

Just before eight o'clock, a 26-year-old featherweight from England, older brother of Randolph Turpin, and the world middleweight champion about to put his title on the line against Robinson, climbed into the ring to fight a dark-haired, pale-faced New Yorker called Joe Walmsley. Jackie Turpin's purse was $500, the most he was ever paid for a single fight in his 13-year career. No British boxer since the Second World War had won a fight in America, so if Turpin could manage it, he would lift the hoodoo before his brother's defense of the title he had won from Robinson 64 days before.

When he'd heard that Walmsley was New York State featherweight champion, Turpin turned to his manager, George Middleton, and whispered in his ear, "Oh God, George, you might have started me off down the ladder a bit. New York State is a big place."

When the bell rang, Turpin moved quickly to the center of the ring and fired a number of sharp jabs into the American's face, "giving Walmsley summat to think about," Turpin would recall years later in his enchantingly soft Warwickshire accent, pure Midlands of England. Out of nowhere, Walmsley unleashed a right hand that struck him on the top of the head and down he went for a count of six. Turpin got back up and waded into the brassy New Yorker, barely relenting for the rest of the six rounds.

"Jackie is a light tan, and I thought he boxed a bit like Jackie 'Kid' Berg, an English lightweight of the 1930s, getting inside fast and throwing dozens of punches, most of which landed, but none of which seemed solid," Liebling recorded in his classic collection *The Sweet Science*. "Still, the other boy went down for short counts twice, and Turpin earned the decision. I knew that somewhere in the stands there were 500 members of the Queen Elizabeth's crew, and the cheering for the featherweight Turpin showed where they were sitting—behind the third-base line."

This might have been the greatest night of his boxing life had "Licker," his kid brother, not lost to Robinson a couple of hours later. In a 131-fight career, Jackie Turpin lost 35 and drew eight. He won the Midlands Area featherweight title in 1953 but was a journeyman at best. Few people ever paid much attention to Jackie Turpin after he retired. Then in 1998 he met a university lecturer and writer called Terry Fox in a restaurant halfway between Warwick, where Turpin lives, and Stoke-on-Trent. "He greeted me like an old friend," Fox recalled, "partly because that's the type of man he is and partly because of my apparently remarkable similarity to his window cleaner." In the course of the conversation, Turpin remarked how "nobody's ever written the truth about me and my brothers." Fox shrugged his shoulders and asked him, "Why not write the truth yourself?"

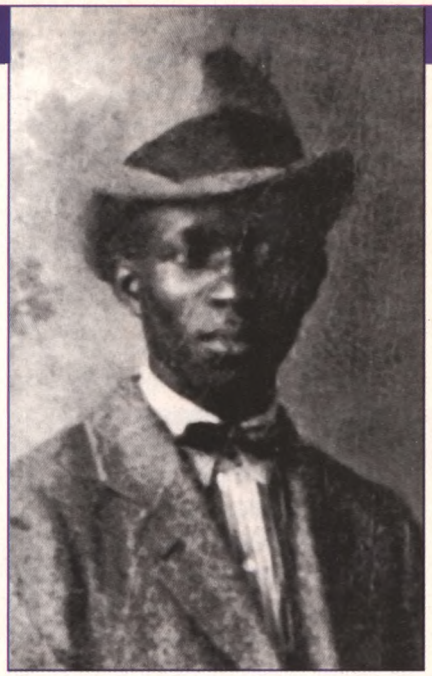
Turpin laughed. "We've been trained to use our hands in a different way," he said. "We done our talking with our fists. I couldn't write a book."

"We could write a book together," Fox suggested.

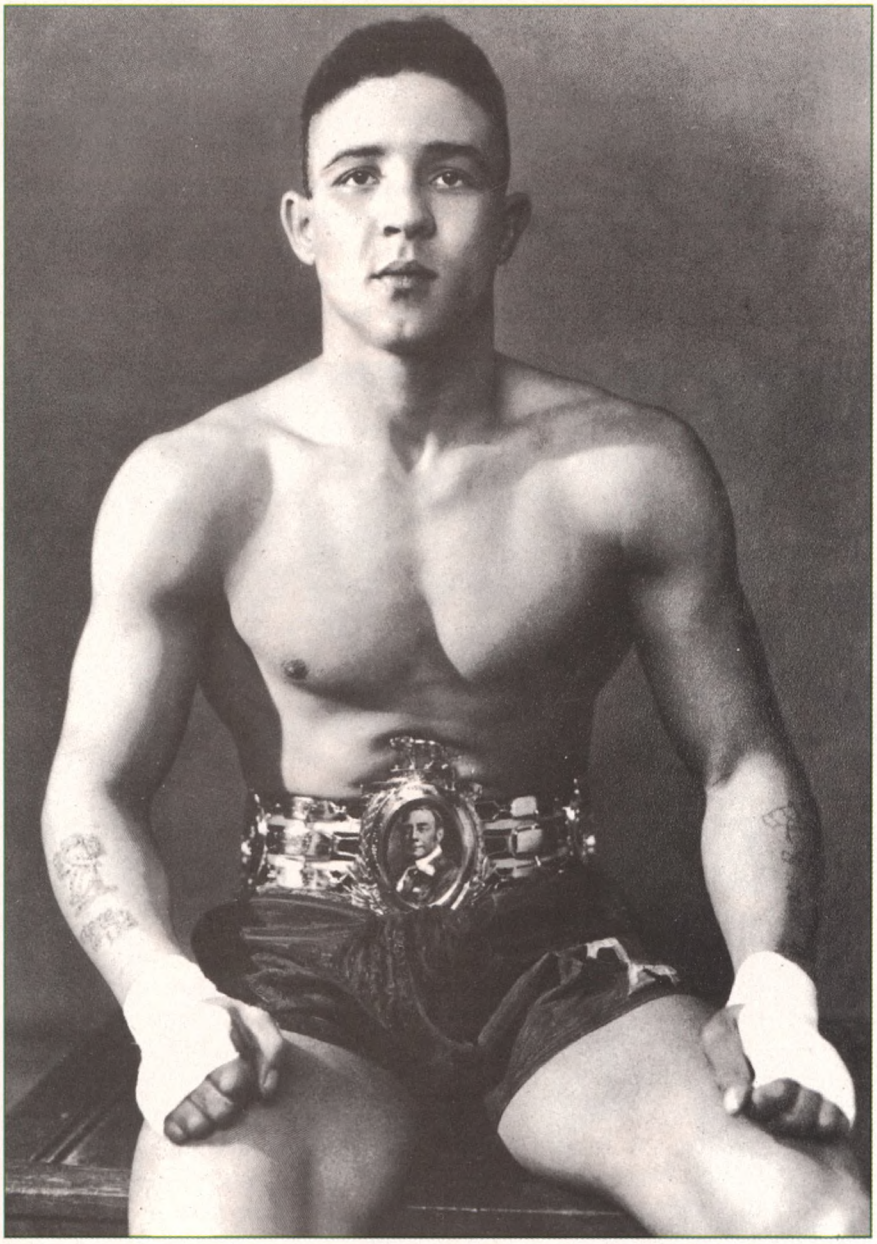
The result of their labors, a historical, emotional, and enchantingly warmhearted collaboration, was published in September 2005. *Battling Jack: You Gotta Fight Back* (published by Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh and London) is the story of three Turpins, Randolph, Dick and Jackie, the most significant fighting family in British boxing history.

As he proudly showed off the photos hanging on the wall of his living room—Randolph wearing his Lonsdale belt, himself and his late wife, Betty (the girl he told when he first met her at a dance, "I'm going to marry those legs one day."), his older brother, Dick, the first black man ever to be allowed to challenge for a British title, which he won in 1948, and his fearless mother, Beatrice, widowed only days before her 25th birthday—the memories came cascading back. He had recently been unwell, but the enthusiasm and energy with which he moved around, as well as the sharpness of his mind, combined with an endearingly self-deprecating sense of humor, meant that Turpin seemed much younger than his 80 years, particularly when he reminisced about a childhood as if it could have been yesterday.

"People ask where we got the name, the Battling Turpins, and I always say it was from her," he insisted, pointing to the picture of his mum. "She was the first fighting Turpin. She was just amazing. I remember a teacher of mine, a Mr. King. He tore the leg of my trousers and a patch off my jersey and stuck a pen in my face, which drew blood. Must have been summat I'd done or summat he thought I'd done. He bought me two new jerseys when he realized what he'd done, but my mum was so angry when she heard about it, and she went after him. She took a bullwhip with her and knocked him off his bike, and whatever she said to him, I never had any problems with Mr. King again. That was my mum!"



Lionel Fitzherbert Turpin, an immigrant from Guyana, was the father of the Turpin brothers. He never really recovered from wounds suffered in World War I and died at the age of 33, leaving a widow, three sons, and a daughter to fend for themselves.



Jack's baby brother, Randy, is pictured wearing his Lonsdale belt, emblematic of the British middleweight championship he won by stopping Albert Finch in October 1950. Less than a year later, "The Leamington Licker" upset Robinson to become world middleweight champion.

Turpin's father was descended from slaves who originated in West Africa, though Lionel Fitzherbert Turpin was actually born in Georgetown, the capital of the Republic of Guyana, adjacent to Venezuela and the only British colony in South America. Lionel always regarded himself as British and traveled to Britain as a merchant seaman in his teens before signing up in 1915 at the York Depot of the York and Lancaster Regiment. The world was at war and Turpin was posted to the front, fighting at the Somme before a gas shell explosion left him wounded near Arras in northern France in the final weeks of hostilities.

"Trench warfare. Hell on earth. It was a miracle anyone come through that,"

Jackie wrote touchingly in his book. "The Great War lasted for four years and three months and was a bloody free-for-all. They was only lads in soldier coats. Two medals, two gas-burnt lungs, and a shell wound in his back. When the hospital had done all they could he was sent to Hill House in Warwick to convalesce. It gets me because people nowadays think having black people in this country is new. My dad was the first black man in Warwick and Leamington Spa, but hundreds of black people have been living in Britain, and been born in Britain, for hundreds of years, and hundreds of people from British colonies settled up and down the country after fighting in the First World War or Second World War. They didn't teach me this at school, and there's nothing about it in the history books, but they were British people and it's proper British history."

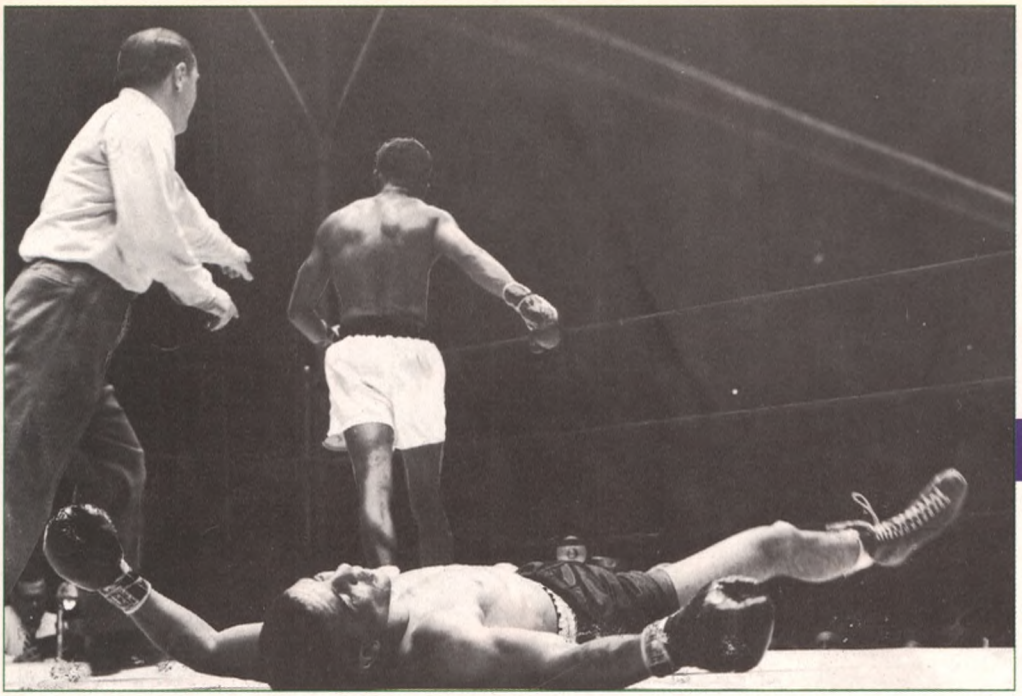
Lionel and Beatrice met in 1920, and she gave birth to three boys and a girl (another boy was stillborn) before his war wounds began to catch up on the "always immaculately dressed" Guyanese immigrant. "On the morning of March 6, 1929, 11 years after it had struck him down, the German gas shell took the last breath from what was left of my poor dad's lungs," wrote Jackie. "He was 33 years of age."

Beatrice remarried, and the family grew up in Leamington where Dick became the first of the Turpins to become a professional—"£2-a-time" fighter. His two brothers quickly followed him into the business and, trained by an Irishman called Mick Gavin, they became renowned. Jackie still winces when he recalls some of the sparring sessions in which his brothers, who were both heavier, would beat on him incessantly. But he loved them both, particularly Randolph whom he always knew had the talent and dedication to reach the pinnacle of his profession. Dick, however, made history first, beating British middleweight titleholder Vince Hawkins on June 28, 1948, in Birmingham to become the first black man to compete for and win a Lonsdale belt. The brothers, who all fought and won on that seminal night, helped their mother through the ropes and into the ring. They stood together "as proud as could be," a scene that would be gloriously recreated at Earls Court in London 13 years later when Randolph beat the middleweight king Robinson, maybe the single greatest night ever in British boxing.

"Robinson oozed confidence as he climbed in the ring, as if there wasn't a single man on earth who could beat him," Turpin recalled, gazing at his kid brother's portrait in the far corner of the room, the boy whom Jean, their sister, gave the pet name "Licker" to as a toddler when he railed against being the 'lickerist' (littlest) in the family.

"Randolph was always calm and collected before a fight, any fight, and he was just the same that night, almost like me and him were just about to spar three rounds," recalled Jackie. "It was a great fight, and I always remember thinking how they said Jake La Motta done well

Fighting Jack and his bride, Betty, on their wedding day in 1947. Jack always said it was his "most important match." Betty died in 1999.



Robinson walks away from Randy Turpin after decking the Englishman in the 10th round of their rematch. Sadly, it proved to be the start of a long slide into oblivion for Turpin, who, according to authorities, committed suicide in 1966. Jack, however, refuses to believe his brother took his own life.

against Robinson—and he looked like he'd been carried out of a butcher's shop. Randolph had Sugar Ray hanging on at the final bell. It was unbelievable. Then the decision was announced, and it was pandemonium. The crowd in Earls Court were singing, 'For he's a jolly good fellow,' and around every town and city in the whole of England people started shouting, 'Turpin's won.' Even King George VI announced to his dinner guests at Buckingham Palace, 'Turpin has won.'

"It was like food and clothes and petrol and sweets had suddenly all come off ration, like summer had come after a long, hard winter, like the war was finally over."

Yet that night led inexorably toward tragedy. Robinson beat Turpin in their rematch at the Polo Grounds, "when the referee (Ruby Goldstein) stepped between the fighters (after a 10th-round barrage by Robinson) and grabbed Turpin in his arms, I thought I had never seen a man so game or so beaten as the mulatto from Leamington Spa," wrote Liebling—and over the years "The Leamington Licker" could never quite manage to reconcile how ephemeral success can be. It is a subject Jackie finds difficult to discuss.

On May 17, 1966, in the Russell Street cafe in Leamington that he ran with his wife, Gwen, Randolph was found dead from two gunshot wounds. His little daughter, Carmen, had been shot twice too, but she pulled through. In the book, Jackie addressed the incident and surrounding circumstances, though Randolph's death still distresses him.

"Suicide or murder? I get sick and tired of that question," he wrote. "Every time I'm interviewed, they work towards it. It annoys me, cuz Randolph wasn't just a famous boxer; he was my baby brother and I loved him. We'd drifted apart in later years because of Gwen, but that didn't alter what I thought of him. How would you like it if you'd lost someone you loved like that, and every time a complete stranger spoke to you they went on about it like it was a film they saw once and didn't quite understand the ending?

"I'd dearly love to come up with an explanation of my brother's death that would end all the speculation and he could be allowed to rest in peace, but, truth is, I can't. But, no, I don't believe Randolph committed suicide. And, no, I don't know who killed him ... We all miss him. He had something about him. If you had known him, you'd have really liked him. He was under pressure, but he never ever walked away from trouble, never, ever sidestepped anything, regardless of size or weight. As for money: 'Memories are worth more than money,' he used to say, and if there was one thing the Turpins knew it was how to get by without it. I will never ever believe Randolph took his own life."

■ ■ ■

He walked across the room to a cabinet and held out two medals and a couple of black and white photographs of the destroyer HMS Myngs. "I was 4½ years in the navy, volunteered during the war, signed up with a mate of mine, Jackie Lewis, in Sibley Hall in Coventry," he said. "We came home, and, after a short while, Jackie went off, but I was kept waiting and waiting. After six weeks, there was a heavy knock on the front door one day, and, when I opened it, two policemen were standing there. 'John Matthew Turpin (addressing him by his full name), I'm arresting you for desertion from His Majesty's Forces,' one of them announced. 'Desertion?' I said. 'I'm still waiting for my bleedin' papers.' The coppers laughed and said they'd look into it.

"My mum used to worry about me, that I'd be scared on operations, but you never had time to be scared. I learnt a lot about life in the navy and the same in the boxing ring too. I was never no world beater, like my baby brother, but I'd love to do it all over again. I trained fighters after retiring from fighting, and I'm still trying to do something with the amateurs here in Warwick. The book, I'm proud of it. Terry says we used to sit in here, I'd nod off, and it would just all come out of me in my sleep! Funny, when I close my eyes sometimes, it can still seem so real." ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent. Additional information about* Battling Jack: You Gotta Fight Back *can be obtained at: www.mainstreampublishing.com

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Marcelo Dominguez W 10 Mariano Ocampo
China Smith W 10 Dennis McKinney
Derrick Rossy KO 2 Gary Bell
Eddie Chambers W 8 Andrew Greeley
Rafael Butler KO 2 Ronnie Smith

Cruiserweights

Thomas Hearns KO 10 Shannon Landberg
Kenny Keene W 10 Gary Gomez
Fabio Tuiach KO 7 Paolo Ferrara

Light Heavyweights

Ronald Hearns KO 2 Kirk Douglas
Berry Butler KO 9 Olando Rivera
Yusaf Mack KO 3 Tim Shocks

Super Middleweights

Peter Manfredo Jr. KO 3 Scott Pemberton
Jurgen Brahmer W 12 Andre Thysse
Chad Dawson W 8 Jason Naugler
Cleveland Corder KO 7 Jonathan Corn
Alfredo Contreras W 10 Eduardo Ayala

Middleweights

Scott Dann KO 9 Larry Sharpe
John Duddy W 10 Julio Jean
Tyrone Brunson KO 1 James Morrow
Javier Castillejo KO 2 Luis Carmona

Junior Middleweights

Yuri Foreman KO 1 Jimmy LeBlanc
Bobby Aucoin KO 2 Michael Moss
Sechew Powell W 10 Robert Frazier
Maximo Cuevas KO 3 Allen Conyers

Welterweights

Emanuel Augustus KO 10 Jaime Rangel
Chad Broussard W 12 Homer Gibbins
Michel Trabant KO 10 Michèle Orlando
Henry Bruseles W 10 Arturo Urena
Andre Berto KO 3 Jonathan Tubbs
Mary Jo Sanders KO 3 Iva Weston

Junior Welterweights

Jose Luis Castillo W 12 Rolando Reyes
Vicente Mosquera KO 6 Carlos Saenz (*Non-Title Bout*)
Jose Santa Cruz W 12 Edner Cherry
Juan Melero W 12 Mihaita Mutu
Arniel Tinampay W 10 Jury Noda

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Welterweight Augustus takes apart Rangel

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Junior welterweight Malignaggi stings Camarena

Gerardo Gomez W 10 Sergio Ledesma
Paul Malignaggi W 10
Donald Camarena
Fernando Saucedo W Disq. 10
Sergio Gonzalez
Ricardo Castillo KO 3
Sammy Ventura
Ameth Diaz KO 6 Luis Samudio
Lanardo Tyner KO 1 Leo Martinez

Lightweights

Oscar Sandoval W 10
Jesus Garcia Simon
Koba Gogoladze W 12 Antonio Davis
Randy Suico KO 4 Ryuhei Sugita
Santos Benavides KO 2
Orlando Membreno

Junior Lightweights

Jun Paderna KO 1
Suttisak Samaksaman

Featherweights

Saohin Condo KO 6 Hussein Pazzi
Ricardo Barrera KO 5 Angel Diaz
Leonilo Miranda KO 3 Romel Aguilar

Junior Featherweights

Celestino Caballero KO 7
Roberto Bonilla
Toshiaki Nishioka W 10 Hugo Vargas
Masayuki Mitani W 10 Jaime Ortiz
Sande Otieno KO 3 Rashid Ally
Rikiya Fukuhara KO 8 Toshimitsu Sakai

Bantamweights

Alejandro Valdez W 12
Mauricio Pastrana
Malcolm Tunacao W 12 Kohei Ohba
Guido Antilef KO 4 Hugo Martinez
Michael Domingo KO 9 Roger Galicia
Z Gorres W 10 Jose Alfredo Tirado
Nehomar Cermeno KO 6
Carlos Guevara
Kohei Kono KO 9 Prosper Matsuura

Junior Bantamweights

Masibulele Makepula KO 6 Jun Talape

Flyweights

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam W 12
Gilberto Keb Baas
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Daisuke Naito W 10 Daigo Nakahiro
Rosendo Alvarez KO 6
Eduardo Pacheco
Lee Haskins KO 2 Anthony Mathias
Delia Lopez W 8 Blanca Perez
Martin Zepeda KO 1 Marcos Luna

Junior Flyweights

Juan Alfonso Keb Baas W 10
Manuel Ruiz

Martin Castillo W 12 Alexander Munoz

Las Vegas, Nevada: When Castillo and Munoz fought in December 2004, Castillo captured the WBA super flyweight belt by winning a unanimous decision on wide scores. In the rematch at the Thomas & Mack Center, the result was ultimately the same, with Castillo winning a 12-round decision. But the path to get to that result was much different this time, with Munoz giving Castillo a much tougher time en route to dropping a split decision.

"I expected that Munoz would be very well prepared, more prepared than last time, and he was," said Castillo after making his third successful title defense. "I think I showed the world who I am and that the first fight wasn't a fluke."

Munoz came out in the opening round looking for the knockout, while Castillo tried to move around the ring. But Munoz, 115, was swinging wild hooks and caught Castillo, 114½, on the chin with a wide left hook followed by a right hand that put him down on the canvas. Already, things were going better for Munoz than they did 13 months earlier. But during the next three rounds, Castillo, the 1996 Mexican Olympian, began to take control of the fight as he started to use his accurate left jab to keep the hard-punching Munoz at a distance.

The power of Venezuelan Munoz was clear for all to see, but it wasn't his punch that opened up cuts over Castillo's eyes in the fifth and sixth rounds. Headbutts were to blame for that damage. In the middle rounds, Munoz, 30, took over, and he landed a clean right hand to Castillo's chin that momentarily hurt the titleholder. But Castillo, 29, battled back, and by the ninth, he had the right eye of Munoz swollen. A Castillo left hook followed by an overhand right rocked Munoz in the 11th. His legs wobbled as the bell sounded to end the round.

Munoz, 28-2 (26), who had won three straight fights since his loss to Castillo, started the final round on shaky legs. Castillo, 30-1 (16), tried for the finish, but his opponent's power was still there and he got caught with a good right hand to the head. Both fighters put on a tremendous performance in this all-action bout.

A lot of the rounds during this fight were close and hard to score. Glenn Feldman (USA) scored it 115-112 for Castillo, while Dalby Shirley (USA) saw it 115-112 for Munoz. Richard Houck (USA) scored the fight 116-111, giving the split decision win to Castillo. THE RING scored the bout 115-112 for Castillo. The referee was Richard Steele (USA).

"Munoz is a great fighter and he is very powerful," Castillo said, "but I was able to come back and win. I am very happy. I also want to make sure that people hear this: I am officially calling out [Jorge] Arce, [Fernando] Montiel, and if I can't get them, I'll move up and fight [Rafael] Marquez."

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(1-21-06)
Wayne McCullough

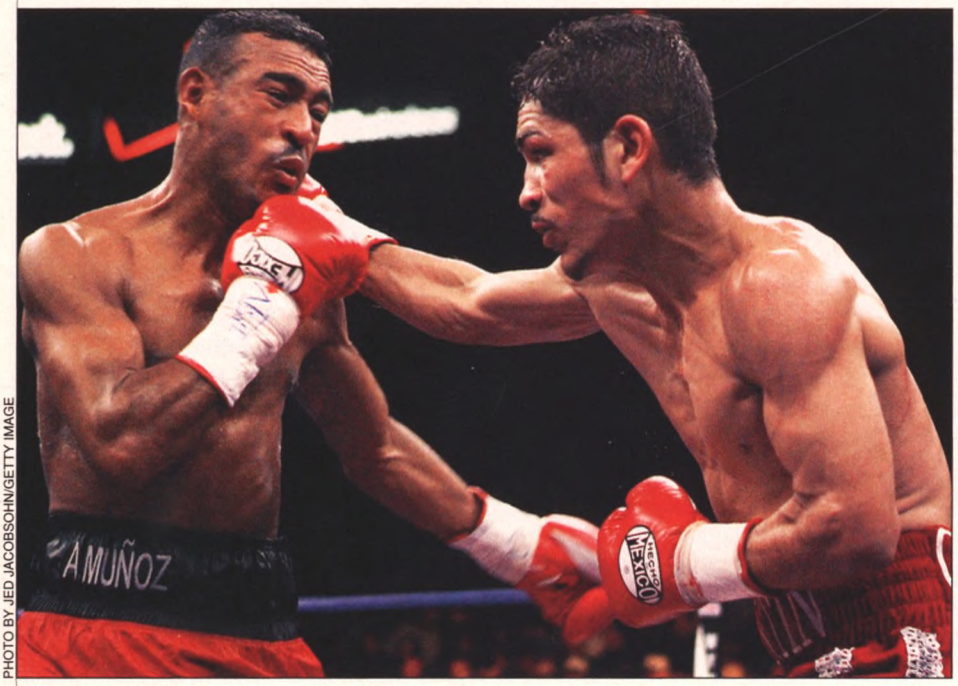


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGE

Castillo jams a right into Munoz during bristling rematch

Takashi Koshimoto W 12 Injin Chi

Fukuoka, Japan: Tall Japanese southpaw Koshimoto, 126, scored a major upset on his home turf, making good use of his fleet feet to frustrate WBC featherweight titlist Chi, 126, Korea, and take the belt via a controversial split verdict after 12 heats. The key to the result was Koshimoto suffering a cut over his right eyebrow from an 11th-round clash of heads, which cost the innocent but uncut Chi a penalty point in accordance with the WBC's rules. While judge Noparat Sricharoen (Thailand) had Koshimoto winning 115-112 and Omar Mintum (Mexico) had Chi ahead by 116-111, American judge Burt Clements had the

challenger up just 114-113, meaning without the point deduction, Chi would have retained the alphabet trinket on a draw. The referee was Malcolm Bulner (Australia).

The 5'10" southpaw challenger began the opening round well, but Chi fought back with busy combinations later in the first session to make it tough to score. Koshimoto, 35, dominated the second through fourth rounds by utilizing his footwork and southpaw stance, as he occasionally scored with light but accurate southpaw lefts to the less aggressive Korean. It seemed strange that Chi, normally a ferocious fighter, remained cautious and cool without throwing many punches. It appeared possible that Chi had taken the fight lightly and wasn't in his best shape.

PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Koshimoto (right) upsets Chi to take WBC featherweight belt

Strongly encouraged by his cornermen, Chi, 32, began to apply the pressure in the fifth. The Korean maintained this strategy until the ninth, though Koshimoto occasionally scored with countering lefts to the onrushing titlist. The 10th saw Koshimoto produce three aggressive minutes, turning loose with good one-two combinations, while Chi looked content to avert the attacks with weaving and ducking without throwing back many punches.

The 11th was the key because of the point deduction. Koshimoto fought desperately and won the round on two of the judges' scorecards, giving him a 10-8 margin on those cards. Though Chi, 30-3-1 (18), used all of his remaining energy to win the last round, it was too late, as Koshimoto, 39-1-2 (17), endured his attack and finished on his feet one point ahead.

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Presented by EVERLAST

Manny Pacquiao

Rarely is it this easy to decide the Fighter of the Month. But it just so happens that a certain junior lightweight from the Philippines *knocked Erik Morales out* in January. That's all you need to know. Case closed. You knock out Erik Morales, you're the Fighter of the Month.

In 51 previous fights, Morales had never been stopped, had never come close to being stopped, and, aside from a questionable call in the last round of his first fight with Marco Antonio Barrera, had never even been knocked down. Manny Pacquiao kayoed all of those statements. He dished out the first two *real* knockdowns of Morales' career, and he scored the stoppage in round 10.

And he did all of this against a man who had defeated him just 10 months earlier. It's one thing to knock out a great fighter; it's another thing to knock out a great fighter who appears to maybe have your number. This was, in every way, an extraordinary performance by Pacquiao. And it made for the easiest Fighter of the Month decision we've had in a while.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The crowd was on its feet when the verdict in favor of the local prospect was declared. Some people wept for joy, since Koshimoto became the first fighter from the Kyushu island of Japan to win a major title.

Promoter: **Fukuoka Promotions**
(1-29-06)
Joe Koizumi

Mikkel Kessler KO 10 Eric Lucas

Copenhagen, Denmark: Joe Calzaghe and Jeff Lacy were preparing for a bout that would produce a new RING champion at super middleweight when Kessler, 168, Copenhagen, Denmark, threw down a marker confirming his credentials as the frontrunner to fight the winner. Against an experienced and determined ex-titleholder in Lucas, 167¾, Magog, Quebec, the 26-year-old Dane commanded the action masterfully, retaining the WBA super middleweight belt when referee Luis Pabon of Puerto Rico intervened at 1:51 of the 10th at Brondby Hall. It was his second defense since stopping Puerto Rican Manny Siaca in the eighth round in November 2004.

Throw in a solid display against another former titlist, Anthony Mundine, in the Australian's hometown of Sydney last year, and the message becomes even clearer that "The Viking Warrior" is a prodigious force in the 168-pound class. "Apart from Roy Jones, Kessler is the best I've ever faced," Lucas declared in his dressing room, and no one doubted the 34-year-old Canadian's sincerity.

Lucas, 38-7-3 (14), had just been overwhelmed by a typical demonstration of Kessler's virtuosity. He is an accomplished boxer whose mantra, "Be the smart one," is exemplified by everything he does in the ring. From the opening bell, Kessler worked effectively behind his long left jab, landing solid right crosses and making Lucas miss with retaliatory left hooks. He also forced a high-tempo pace that the veteran challenger was ultimately unable to live with. Lucas was showing the signs of battle as early as the fourth round, a cut around his right eye dripping blood down his cheek. It was in the fourth that the Canadian enjoyed his most encouraging flourish of the night when he landed a strong right hand, but Kessler responded with a right uppercut and a powerful right hook of his own, and the chances of a revival by Lucas diminished significantly.

"I took all his hope away from him more quickly than I expected," Kessler reflected. "He was strong, but he never hurt me because I maintained my concentration throughout the fight."

By the sixth round, Lucas was concentrating almost entirely on trying to block Kessler's precision punches, but still the Dane penetrated his guard, particularly with his jab. Blood was splattered all over Lucas' face, and the steady beating continued over the next few rounds, with Kessler landing at will. In the ninth, Lucas was cut over the left eye, and he now looked a pitiful sight. The will was still there, but his body was too weak. When the drubbing continued into the 10th, referee Pabon intervened just as the towel came in from the Canadian's corner, not a moment too soon.

"Markus Beyer is one I really want," Kessler, 37-0 (28), said about the German WBC super middleweight titleholder. "He's pretty good, very experienced, a southpaw, but I feel he is well over the hill. I am in my prime and I want to make the best fights against Calzaghe, Lacy, whoever. That's what I'm working for and I'm convinced these fights will happen."

Promoter: **Team Palle**
(1-14-06)
Brian Doogan

Jorge Arce KO 6 Adonis Rivas

Cancun, Mexico: Just when you think you've seen it all in boxing, along comes the Arce-Rivas rematch, a bout that gave us the following: a boxer needing a haircut in the middle of the fight; a fighter taking on an opponent who's managed by the man he'll be facing next; a postfight skirmish between that fighter and the opponent's manager; and the second fight between two combatants in six weeks that ends with the same fighter losing somewhat controversially on account of a cut.

Arce and Rivas first met in mid-December, with Rivas being stopped in round 10 due to a cut over his right eye that seemed to most observers not severe enough to warrant a stoppage. Hence the rematch, with Arce already scheduled to face Rivas' manager, former 105-pound and 108-pound titleholder Rosendo Alvarez, on April 8.

PHOTO BY LUIS ACOSTA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Arce splits Rivas' guard with a left en route to repeat TKO victory

Charismatic Mexican Arce, 112, came to the ring at Plaza de Toros with beads at the ends of his braided hair, an unusual and ultimately problematic stylistic choice. But prior to the beads becoming an issue, the two fighters slugged it out in an action-packed manner, with both gunning for the early knockout. Early in round two, Rivas, 112, Nicaragua, hit the deck from a low blow, and referee Gary Ritter (USA) gave him two minutes to recover. Moments later, an accidental clash of heads cut Arce over the right eyebrow, and the favored "Travieso" immediately tore into Rivas in hopes of ending the fight. But at the same time, beads were falling out of Arce's hair from the impact of Rivas' punches, and prior to the third round, the Mexican's cornerman had to cut parts of his hair to get the rest of the beads out.

PHOTO BY MARCUS BRANDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Faded Beyer (right) still had enough left stop Colajanni

The removal of the beads did nothing to alter the torrid pace of the fight, with Arce, 26, generally opening exchanges, and Rivas, 33, attempting to answer back whenever Arce would stop punching. In the sixth, a punch opened a cut over Rivas' right eyebrow, prompting Ritter to ask the ringside doctor to take a look. The doctor gave his approval for the fight to go on, but between rounds, Rivas' corner surprisingly stopped the fight on account of the cut, making Arce, 43-3-1 (33), a TKO winner once again. The loss extended the winless streak of Rivas, 21-9-2 (10), to four fights.

And that was just the beginning of the fun. Moments later, Arce and Alvarez began trading trash talk, which soon devolved into a brawl, with an Arce cornerman at one point kicking Alvarez in the thigh. And after that, fellow top flyweight Vic Darchinyan entered the ring, got on the microphone and called Arce out.

Darchinyan will have to get in line—and perhaps he should plan on brawling with Arce after the April fight with Alvarez.

Promoter: **Top Rank**
(1-28-06)

Markus Beyer KO 12 Alberto Colajanni

Berlin, Germany: The occasion, the capacity crowd in the Tempodrom Arena, and nerves all proved too much for Colajanni, 164, Sestri Levante, Italy, who was unable to mount a challenge for the WBC super middleweight belt held by Beyer, 167, Cologne, Germany. Midway through the bout, people were leaving, and the standing of neither man was enhanced before Beyer finally put the punches together to stop his 32-year-old Italian challenger in the final round. This was the fourth defense of his third reign as WBC titleholder.

At 34, however, Beyer is not the boxer he once was. Of the main titleholders in the division, he would be regarded as the weakest. Never a big puncher, the German's hand speed has also begun to slow, but he has beaten (at least officially) his fair share of significant opponents over the years—Richie Woodhall, Eric Lucas, Danny Green, and Omar Sheika—and he had far too much ring savvy for the overawed Colajanni. The Italian was competing outside of his native land for the first time in a six-year career and had stopped only two opponents in 19 fights, and his inexperience and relative incompetence showed.

"I couldn't adapt to Beyer's style and the tension was just too much for me," he admitted. "I'm sorry that I disappointed the people."

Without being required to do much at all, Beyer won every round clearly, as the Italian's backpedaling tactics—presumably designed to frustrate Beyer—backfiring completely. Colajanni simply never got into the fight. A right hook and left cross combination floored him in the fourth, though he was more off-balance than hurt. Referee Larry O'Connell (England) issued the mandatory eight-count, and Colajanni, 18-1 (2), went straight back into reverse gear, surviving the round. At the end of the sixth, O'Connell felt compelled to visit his corner to encourage a more positive output, but to no avail. Colajanni was never confident enough to take a forward step.

Beyer, 34-2 (13), was not without blame for the paucity of action, for he never forced the issue, never drove his compliant challenger against the ropes or into a corner to try to bring a submission. He just did enough, which in the circumstances was not too difficult. Finally, in the 12th, he put together the finishing touch that such an easy assignment demanded. A heavy left connected with the Italian's jaw and he went down, the referee issuing another count and again allowing Colajanni to continue. This time Beyer

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hill (right) shows he still has something left by beating Brudov

did press home his advantage and dropped Colajanni with another left. The towel flew into the ring from the Italian's corner just as the referee waved it off at the 2:12 mark.

Promoter: **Wilfried Sauerland**
(1-28-06)
Brian Doogan

Kassim Ouma KO 8 Francisco Mora

Tohono O'odham Nation, Arizona: Still working his way back from his upset loss to Roman Karmazin last summer, junior middleweight contender Ouma looked in peak form with an entertaining eighth-round stoppage of sturdy Mora, 154, Cordoba, Argentina, at the Desert Diamond Casino.

"I think I am better than I ever was," Ouma said on the ring mike afterward. His actions spoke louder than his words, and a standing-room-only hive of more than 1,800 screamed in response. Ouma, 154, West Palm Beach, Florida, piled on the punishment early and often in a virtual shutout. He backed up Mora with thudding bodywork, then picked him apart with looping lefts that quickly put a look of satisfaction on the face of Ouma's trainer, Ronnie Shields.

Ouma, 27, went about his bang-up business calmly. His patience was aided by solid defensive moves that made Mora's big whiffs miss by several inches—sometimes even feet—at a time. It was a harsh welcome for Mora, 31, in his first fight outside his homeland.

It wasn't long before Ouma's southpaw stick had Mora's chronic nosebleed flowing again. Mora has reportedly dealt with that problem for years, so it didn't seem to bother him, but Ouma's chopping follow-up lefts certainly did. The Argentine never stopped charging, but his efforts were greeted by huge whaps from each side.

Hard rights left Mora open for uppercuts that sunk him in round two. He was up quickly, but that just meant another series of smacks from Ouma. Mora gave Ouma some problems in round three, but after that it was pretty much early spring training: Ouma pitched, Mora caught.

Mora lost a moot point in the seventh session for low blows. Ouma would deduct the finer points in his own fashion within another minute or two. A huge left counter flattened Mora, 50-10 (34), as the eighth wound down, and referee Bobby Ferrara (USA) waved it off at 2:34 of the frame.

"I just kept following my trainer's rule of using my jab," said Ouma.

Ouma, 23-2-1 (15), was cheerful as he held his two-year-old son after the fight, but at the press conference he spoke of troubled emotions, fallout from his brutal childhood in Uganda where military-kidnapping-related nightmares still haunt him. His post-defection transformation has been well-documented, but for Ouma it's still day-to-day life.

"I have dreams about things I hope other people never see," said Ouma, looking like a dazed kayo victim. "I miss the family I left behind. I really miss my grandmother, who is going blind. I really want her to see what became of me."

According to promoter Bernard Hopkins, a rematch with Karmazin may be near. There was also talk of a possible middleweight expedition against gatekeeper David "Destroyer" Gonzales, who stole the show with an undercard blastout.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(1-27-06)
Phil Woolever

Virgil Hill W 12 Valery Brudov

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Just when it appeared that the 42-year-old Hill had gone into boxing's equivalent of the witness protection program, the former light heavyweight and cruiserweight titleholder resurfaced like Rasputin to gain the vacant WBA cruiser belt with a workmanlike performance against Russian Brudov.

How someone such as Hill was able to qualify for the title shot after a 20-month layoff is anyone's guess, but in the world of Fistiana, such occurrences are all too common. Nevertheless, the pride of Bismarck, North Dakota, weighing a career-high 200 pounds, made the most of his chance. It could be argued that loser Brudov, 194, St. Petersburg, Russia, was also undeserving of a chance at the hardware despite his record, as his 30-0 (23) mark going in was hardly accumulated against prime opposition. Fittingly for a fight between two rather unworthy boxers, the title is as meaningless as can be. This belt was only available because RING champion O'Neil Bell is recognized by the WBA as the "super champion." So while this was a fine win for Hill, true fight fans will know better than to call him a champion.

The biggest surprise of the bout was the effectiveness of Hill's legs. The American bounced around the ring like a man 20 years his junior, and the constant movement seemed to bother Brudov, 30, who appeared frustrated at having to constantly chase his foe. Hill controlled the pace from the beginning, jabbing frequently. He scored with occasional one-twos in the first half of the bout, prompting roars of approval from the small but vocal North Dakota contingent. Most of the spectators would have preferred more straight rights and left hooks, but Hill's career success has been forged through the jab and a safety-first approach. As the old saying goes, you can't teach an old dog new tricks, and he was not about to change.

The middle rounds proved to be Brudov's best. The hulking European cut Hill's left eyelid in the sixth with a few right hands, even seeming to briefly stun him. Hill backpedaled to avoid more damage, the anxious moments running their course. Brudov stalked "Quicksilver" in the second half of the fight, periodically scoring with some decent left hooks and straight rights, but his aggression was not effective. He did a poor job of cutting off the ring, and would have served himself better if he had jabbed his way in more often. Hill potshotted enough down the homestretch to leave little doubt on the scorecards.

American judges Lynn Carter, Melvina Lathan, and Steve Weisfeld all scored identically at 118-110 for Hill, 50-5 (23). THE RING tallied 116-112 for Hill.

Said the victor afterward, "[Cutman] Mike Hall won this fight for me. Brudov mashed me with a one-two and split me wide open, and then he did it again. When [New Jersey Athletic Control Board Commissioner] Larry Hazzard sent the doctor over to look at me, I was worried they were going to stop it, but Mike really pulled it out for me."

Said Brudov, 30-1 (23), through a translator, "I'm disappointed. I couldn't catch him. I was shocked he moved so well for a 42-year-old guy. His experience showed."

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Star Boxing**
(1-27-06)
Mike Greenhill

Valdemir Pereira W 12
Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym

Ledyard, Connecticut: In an ongoing battle to determine which of the alphabet groups can be the most pathetic, the IBF got a leg up on the competition by putting this bout together and recognizing it as a featherweight title fight. Nothing against Pereira, who's a strong, undefeated fighter who may just develop into a legitimate top contender, but his win over Fahprakorb at Foxwoods Resort and Casino was thoroughly tainted, and perhaps even overshadowed, by the circumstances surrounding it. Juan Manuel Marquez—recognized by everyone without an agenda as the top 126-pounder in the world—was stripped of the IBF belt last year when no promoter cared enough to bid on his horrid mismatch against undeserving mandatory challenger Fahprakorb, and so the IBF matched the fighter nobody wanted to see in a title fight against another fighter they had ranked far too high. The result: a successor to

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Pereira punishes Fahprakorb with a right en route to winning bogus featherweight belt

Marquez whom THE RING doesn't even rank in its top 10.

Thailander Fahprakorb came in riding a 14-fight winning streak, but the more telling stat came in the last loss before that streak began, a first-round knockout defeat to then-122-pound titlist Manny Pacquiao in which the challenger was floored four times and rushed to the hospital after spending 20 minutes on the canvas. That gave you a sense of whether Fahprakorb belonged in a title fight or warranted being ranked as a mandatory challenger. Not surprisingly, the fight was dominated by the Brazilian Pereira, with the result pretty well decided by round two. A minute into the second round, Pereira, 125, rocked Fahprakorb, 125½, with a left hook, and the Brazilian swarmed his hurt foe, unloading with both hands. Three clean rights to the chin nearly put the Thai fighter on the canvas, but he showed a ton of guts to stay up, and this pattern repeated itself throughout the round: Pereira hurts Fahprakorb, Pereira unloads, Fahprakorb miraculously stays on his feet. This was the definition of a 10-8 round without a knockdown.

The 30-year-old Thailander tried to box his way back into the fight, but he could never get much going. The seventh was another viciously one-sided round in favor of Pereira, and in the 10th, Fahprakorb was rattled again by a couple of right hands to the chin, and all he could do in return was flex his muscles to foolishly suggest he wanted more. Moments later, Pereira, 31, went extremely low with a right uppercut to the groin and, having been warned for low blows a couple of times by referee Eddie Cotton (USA), the Brazilian lost a point. It proved about the only way Fahprakorb, 51-4 (34), could get a point off him.

All three American judges, Tom Kaczmarek, Clark Sammartino, and George Smith, scored the fight the same at the end of 12 rounds, 118-108. The result leaves Pereira, 23-0 (15), essentially both a beltholder and a prospect at the same time, while we can only hope that Fahprakorb has made his last mysterious climb up the alphabet rankings.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Banner Promotions**
(1-20-06)

Eagle Kyowa KO 7 Ken Nakajima

Yokohama, Japan: WBC 105-pound titlist Eagle, 105, impressively retained the belt as he battered Japanese challenger Nakajima, 105, from all angles, swept every round, and finally accelerated his attack to prompt the referee's intervention at 1:01 of the seventh round at the Pacific Yokohama. There were no knockdowns, but it became a lopsided affair as it progressed. Prior to the stoppage, all three judges, Tony Castellano (USA), Herminio Cuevas (Mexico), and Hisatoshi Miyazaki (Japan), tallied 60-54 in favor of the busy-punching Eagle. The referee was Nobuaki Uratani (Japan).

Little-known underdog Nakajima showed aggression in the first round, but Eagle, a Japan-based Thai, responded with more accurate combinations followed by solid left hooks. The second saw Eagle, 27, penetrate the challenger's guard with a sharp left-right combo. In the third, Nakajima, also 27, aimed at the beltholder's breadbasket with solid left uppercuts, but the muscular Eagle shook them off and fought back with precise one-twos and left hooks.

In the fourth, Eagle connected with solid combinations that weakened the challenger, but he showed a lot of heart and lasted the round. Nakajima even came back in the fifth and had his best round of the fight—though Eagle still won it by rallying late with strong combinations.

Nakajima, 14-3 (8), was game and tough enough to recklessly attack in the sixth, but Eagle returned fire and battered him with a two-fisted attack, the bell coming to Nakajima's rescue. As the seventh began, Eagle, 15-1 (6), went all out for the finish with a fusillade of punches that had the fading challenger staggering to the ropes. The titleholder swarmed over him, and the third man made a very well-timed stoppage to save the loser from further punishment.

Promoter: **Green Tsuda Promotions**
(1-17-05)
Joe Koizumi

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kyowa (right) had an easy time stopping Nakajima

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

Santa Cruz clocks Cherry with a right during seesaw sizzler

Jose Armando Santa Cruz W 12
Edner Cherry

El Paso, Texas: Rising lightweights Cherry and Santa Cruz were getting the most significant television exposure of their careers, and they fought as if their livelihoods depended on victory, giving the 1,986 a tremendously entertaining scrap at the Don Haskins Center. Theirs was the Showtime co-feature to the Jose Luis Castillo-Rolando Reyes main event. As it turned out, Cherry-Santa Cruz should have been the headliner.

Cherry, 23, 131¾, Nassau, Bahamas, was the aggressor early on, though not with his usual punch output. Santa Cruz, 25, 133½, Michoacan, Mexico, was content to look for spots to land his long rights and left hooks to the body. Things got interesting in the third, when Cherry punctuating a heated exchange with a short left to the chin and a follow-up right that put Santa Cruz on his behind, the first time he had been knocked down in his career. But Cherry let Santa Cruz off the hook with low volume, and the gangly Mexican took back the initiative with a hard right to the head followed by a left to the body.

Santa Cruz took the middle rounds with a superior work rate, landing bodyshots with both hands as well as left-right combos to the head that caused the Florida-based Bahamian to hold on. The Mexican kept coming forward, throwing wide but bothersome blows, sending Cherry into retreat. A vicious right to the liver nearly caved in Cherry in the seventh, and a solid right to the head forced Cherry to turn his back on Santa Cruz as the shorter man fled to the ropes, looking for help from referee Rocky Burke (USA), who obligingly stopped the action momentarily instead of telling Cherry to protect himself at all times.

By the start of the eighth round, Cherry's left cheekbone was swelling up. Sensing the urgency of the situation, he responded by stunning Santa Cruz early in the round with a short left to the noggin, sending his foe to the ropes. Cherry proceeded to batter his opponent with a flurry of punches, and another short left had Santa Cruz falling back again to the twine. But just as suddenly, Santa Cruz rallied off the ropes with blows of his own, much to the crowd's delight.

Having let him off the hook, Cherry paid for the missed opportunity, as Santa Cruz went back to work in the ninth and 10th with his superior work rate of bodyshots and looping rights. But just when he seemed in total control, once again all-too-economical Cherry turned the tide with a lead left that hurt Santa Cruz badly, and a succeeding flurry sent him headfirst partially through the ropes, nearly out of the ring. It appeared safe to give Cherry the round, but Santa Cruz rallied again, knocking Cherry off-balance with a one-two. Both combatants competed hard in the 12th, but Santa Cruz' harder shots gave him the edge.

Gale Van Hoy (USA) scored it 114-113, Roy Hawkins (USA) tallied 115-112, and Jesse Reyes (USA) recorded an extremely wide 117-110, all for Santa Cruz, 22-1 (12). THE RING ruled it 115-112 for Santa Cruz, who was simply busier and won most of the rounds in which he wasn't obviously hurt. Most ringside observers, however, saw Cherry, 19-4-2 (8), winning the bout.

Promoters: ***Top Rank, Gary Shaw Productions***

(2-4-06)

Mike Greenhill ■

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New Faces

(Continued from Page 28)

"My first priority is to get Elio rounds," Bottjer said. "I didn't expect Elio to knock out Smalls in the first round, because you can't buy experience. Knocking out guys in sparring and what you do in the gym can't compare to what he'll learn in actual fights.

"What we want is for Elio to learn how to react to pressure situations. We don't know how he'll react right now. There was a concern before when he was fighting with his hands low. He still does that, but he's incorporated a style where he moves a lot more. He's still toying with his own style. He has to find whatever style he feels comfortable with and perfect it. We'll be patient. I don't like to say what Elio will be doing in three or six fights. I just want to see how he's progressing fight-by-fight."

Tony Tineo, Elio's manager, thinks otherwise. Tineo believes Rojas is on the fast track and tries to convince anyone within earshot that The Kid can bang with the big boys at 130 pounds soon—very soon.

"Elio never loses a round sparring in Gleason's Gym," Tineo said. "He reminds me of Pernell Whitaker. I'll tell you, this kid doesn't need too much more seasoning. In four or five fights, he can be ready for guys like Barrera, Pacquiao, or Morales. He'll be ready for a world championship later this year or early next year."

Time will tell whether Rojas is indeed ready for that level. What is certain is that he wouldn't be in this position without the early guidance and motivation he received from his father, who worked with amateur fighters while the family lived in the Dominican Republic.

Elio Ramone Rajos had his son start boxing when he was nine. Little Elio was so tiny the gloves often covered his whole arm. But that didn't stop his father from pushing him. After training for a month, Elio's father threw him into a tournament. The Kid won.

Rojas, however, was losing a personal tug-of-war with his dad over what his destiny would ultimately be.

"I started playing baseball when I was eight years old until around the time I was 14, 15 years old," said Rojas. "My

father never agreed with that. My father wanted me to be a boxer. He used to say I was too small to make the Major Leagues. That made me feel bad. I liked boxing, but I liked baseball more. All the kids in my area used to play baseball in high school, and I felt I played good. People always used to ask me why I didn't play for their team."

A slick-fielding shortstop, Elio said a Major League scout wanted to sign him when he was 15. But Elio Ramone Rojas, a coach at a local high school, never agreed. The scout tried convincing Elio's father that many smallish players from the Dominican Republic make it to the Major Leagues. Elio Ramone still wasn't buying it.

It didn't help that Rojas was a rising star in the Dominican amateur ranks either. By the time The Kid was 15, he was training with the Dominican Republic Olympic team. He represented his country at the World Games in 1997, garnering a silver medal at featherweight in the 18-to-20-age bracket. He built an incredible 205-2-1 amateur record. He was a three-time junior national champion, winning gold medals in international competition in Cuba and in the Pan-Am Games in 2001.

Elio Ramone Rojas, however, was never able to bask in his son's achievements. While newspaper headlines trumpeted Elio's victories, his father stood aside with the bittersweet knowledge that he was dying of cancer. The revelation was numbing to his son.

"My father was always around me, taking me everywhere," Elio recalled. "Sometimes, he would take me to school where he worked to teach the other kids how to box. My father called me a month before he died and told me how he wanted me to be the man in the family, to take his position in the home."

Rojas was training for a tournament on September 18, 1998, when his uncle came to the gym, looking harried and anxious, lugging the fateful news that his father's health had begun to worsen.

"I loved my father so much," Rojas said. "I realized I had to go the hospital that day. It was very tough. I cried. It's something I'll never forget."

The Olympic gold medal that The Kid promised his father never came. Mounting financial problems had to be addressed, and boxing professionally was the only way to handle it. Enter Tineo, who found out about Rojas through a contact in the Dominican Republic. In 2004, Tineo signed Rojas with a $30,000 bonus and moved him up to New York City with a working visa.

Though one promise went unfulfilled, Rojas is working diligently toward making the other a reality.

"When I become a world champion, I want to give that title to my father," Elio said. "Every night when I go to bed, I think about my father. When I go to the ring, that's the first thing I think about. He's still with me." ■

PHOTO COURTESY OF DON KING PRODUCTIONS

Rojas made easy work out of Anthony Martinez, winning a six-round decision at Madison Square Garden in New York City. It was one of only four times an opponent had gone the distance with Rojas in his first 15 fights.

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Nov. 2001: It's Time To Flex Your Muscles, Roy: Fight The Trinidad-Hopkins Winner Next! Plus: Laila-Jacqui, Floyd Mayweather, greatest upsets.

March 2002: Tyson At 35: "Old Too Soon, Smart Too Late" Plus: Felix Trinidad, Ricardo Lopez, Naseem Hamed, Steve Forbes, middleweight shockers.

July 2002: Jones vs. Hopkins: What Will Happen When The Trash Talk Stops. Plus: Forrest-Mosley, Arturo Gatti, Wayne McCullough, De La Hoya-Vargas preview, great junior middleweight moments.

Nov. 2002: Lennox Lewis—Is He The Best Heavyweight Since Muhammad Ali? Plus: Naseem Hamed, Kostya Tszyu, Diobelys Hurtado, Rocky Juarez, 10 fights that transcended boxing.

Feb. 2003: Can Anyone Wipe The Smile Off Oscar's Face? Plus: Lennox Lewis, Eric Lucas, Jesse James Leija, Shane Mosley, 10 all-time most exciting fighters.

June 2003: Lennox's Legacy On The Line: Will He Be Toppled In '03? Plus: Fernando Vargas, Arturo Gatti, 2002 in review.

Oct. 2003: Hall Call: Today's Best Fighters—Who's Headed To Canastota? Plus: Hasim Rahman, Mayweather-De La Hoya, Miguel Barrera, Winky Wright, Roy Jones, heavyweight flops.

Jan. 2004: Fernando Vargas: The Latino Gatti. Plus: Lennox Lewis, Manny Pacquiao, Acelino Freitas, Elvir Muriqi, Marco Antonio Barrera, boxing's blue-chippers.

May 2004: Vitali Klitschko: Another Step Toward "World Domination." Plus: Shane Mosley, junior middle report card, when losers win, 2003 in review.

Sept. 2004: Hopkins vs. De La Hoya: What Is Oscar Thinking? Plus: Wright-Mosley, Corrales-Casamayor, Glen Johnson, Felix Sturm, Lennox Lewis, 2004 Hall of Fame, lightweight report card.

Dec. 2004: What's Next? Has Mike Tyson Run Out Of Options? Plus: Gatti & Leija, Kermit Cintron, Floyd Mayweather, British boxing slump, ultimate ratings, featherweight report card.

April 2005: Tszyu Erases Mitchell ... And All Doubts. Plus: Roy Jones, Judah-Spinks preview, Travis Simms, Carl Thompson, Bernard Hopkins, old age.

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August 1964

COVER STORY: "Griffith vs. Rodriguez Title Fight" was the cover headline, but Nat Fleischer's corresponding article inside the issue was titled "Griffith Eyes Giardello."

Griffith had just retained the welterweight title with a split decision over Luis Rodriguez and was eager to move up to the 160-pound division. The Rodriguez fight had drawn only 4,604 customers to the Las Vegas Convention Center, resulting in a modest $50,000 payday for the champion, who was looking for the larger purses that he hoped would be forthcoming as a middleweight.

"I would like to have [Madison Square Garden matchmaker] Teddy Brenner get me [middleweight champion] Joey Giardello," said Griffith. "There is no one in the welter class who can draw enough to make it worth my efforts to defend against."

Brenner did not agree. "I think both Rubin Carter, who stopped you with one punch in the first round, and Joey Archer each deserves a chance at Giardello before you," said Brenner. "I think your best bet is to stay in the welterweight class. There are several good boys you can meet."

Welter champion Griffith wanted a shot at the middleweight crown

As it turned out, Griffith did stay at 147 pounds and made three more successful defenses before finally winning the middleweight championship in April 1966, when he outpointed Dick Tiger, who had regained the 160-pound title from Giardello in the interim. After beating Tiger, Griffith twice defended against Archer, winning 15-round decisions on both occasions.

World Champions

(for the period ended June 18, 1964)

Heavyweight: Cassius Clay
Light Heavyweight: Willie Pastrano
Middleweight: Joey Giardello
Welterweight: Emile Griffith
Junior Welterweight: Eddie Perkins
Lightweight: Carlos Ortiz
Junior Lightweight: Flash Elorde
Featherweight: Sugar Ramos
Bantamweight: Eder Jofre
Flyweight: Pone Kingpech

"Break Up Troublemaking WBA" THE RING's battle against the alphabet organizations is nothing new, as Associate Editor Dan Daniel's article clearly shows.

"A catalogue of the mistakes of the WBA in the last five years would fill more space than THE RING magazine could afford to devote to the damning list," wrote Daniel.

One of Daniel's main concerns was that many WBA officers "went in strong for self-aggrandizement" and "played up their positions for such prerequisites as promoter-paid junkets abroad."

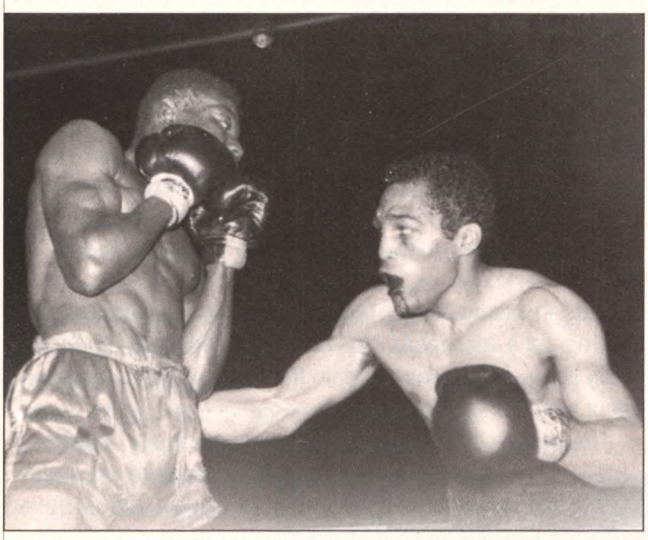
Sound familiar?

"Who Is Floyd Robertson?" Assistant Editor Jersey Jones profiled Ghana featherweight Robertson in the wake of his controversial split decision loss to featherweight champion Sugar Ramos in the first world title fight ever held in the east African country.

The decision in Ramos' favor precipitated a near-riot at the Sports Stadium in Accra. Jones wasn't at the fight, but put considerable stock in the opinion of British writer Peter Wilson, who was ringside.

"I have watched big-time boxing for nearly 30 years," said Wilson. "I have reported from nearly 30 countries, and I have seen about 70 world championship bouts ... I tell you this was the worst decision I have ever seen in a world championship fight."

Robertson got another crack at the featherweight title in 1966 against Vincente Saldivar, who had taken the 126-pound belt from Ramos, but was stopped in two rounds.

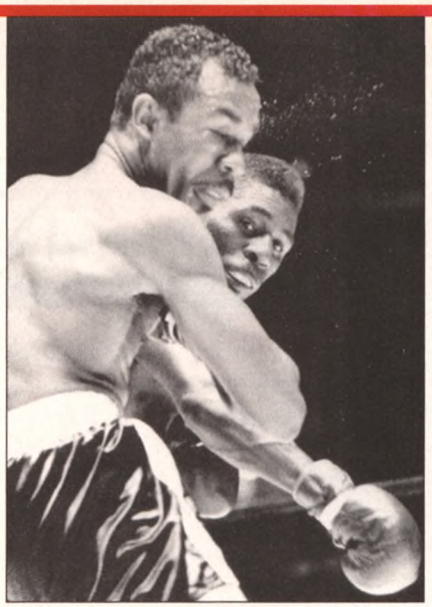


Ramos (right) was lucky to keep the featherweight title against Robertson

"Tiger, Forgotten Man" After losing the middleweight title to Giardello in December 1963, Tiger had returned to his native Nigeria and had not fought since. Writer Ed Buck investigated the situation and unearthed a series of claims and counterclaims concerning the rematch Giardello had promised.

Buck also discovered that Tiger's title-losing purse was $22,000 short of the $100,000 he'd been guaranteed, and that the ex-champ intended to fight a couple of tune-ups for British promoter Jack Solomons. Those bouts never took place, and Tiger eventually returned to the United States, where he regained the title from Giardello in October 1965.

"In And Around Philadelphia" Philly correspondent Archie Pirolli reported on the strange happenings surrounding the 12-round match between local favorite George Benton and Pittsburgh's Johnny Morris for the Pennsylvania State middleweight title.

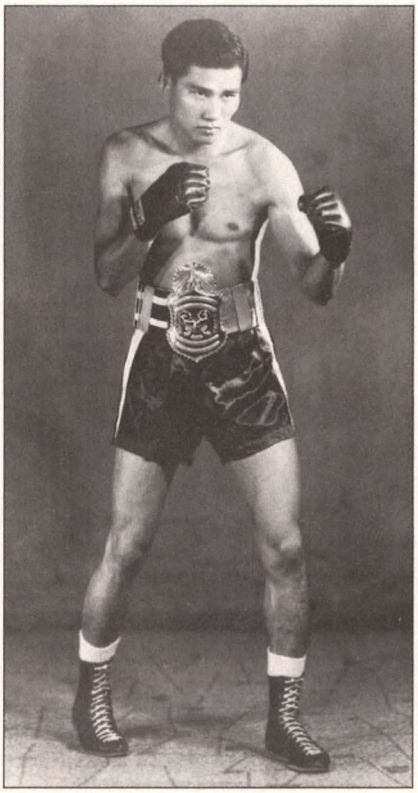


Benton twists Morris' head with a right

After a very close fight that pitted Morris' jabbing and elusive boxing against Benton's superior punching, Morris was awarded a split decision. But Joe Polino, one of Benton's cornermen, asked to see the scorecards, and discovered that referee Pete Tomasco's score, which had originally been announced as 55-54 for Morris, was in error. Commissioner Frank Wildman ruled that the ref had actually scored it 56-55 in favor of Benton.

Five minutes after a disgruntled Benton had left the ring, he was summoned from his dressing room and declared the winner.

"Ring News From Sunny Australia" Australian flyweight champion Rocky Gattellari drew a capacity crowd of 7,500 to Melbourne's Festival Hall for his seventh-round knockout of American Ray Perez. Gattellari's purse of $4,500 was reported as the highest ever paid a flyweight in Australia.



Flyweight champion Kingpetch

"Gattellari is an all-action fighter, the most exciting in Australia and by far our best fighter, pound-for-pound," gushed correspondent Ray Mitchell. "Gattellari will win a world title as soon as he fights for it."

Mitchell couldn't have been more wrong. Gattellari challenged WBC flyweight titleholder Salvatore Burruni in his very next fight and was stopped in the 13th round of a bout held in Sydney. ■

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Health Issues Should Be Left To Health Professionals

I have always been a huge fan of former world bantamweight titleholder Wayne McCullough. There are few boxers as articulate, charismatic, and exciting to watch in the ring. Wayne was placed on medical suspension following his 10th-round TKO loss to Oscar Larios on July 16, 2005. The suspension was recently removed after Wayne completed and passed extensive medical testing.

Does that mean that Wayne or any boxer who passes required testing should be given a license to box?

Passing medical tests is not synonymous with fitness to box. Fitness to box should include having no physical disabilities, but someone can have normal test results and still have a decline in skill that places him at increased risk. What defines this decline is debatable. Perhaps it is a loss of balance and speed; perhaps it is an inability to take a punch or recover from being hit; or perhaps it is just not being able to compete at the same level without suffering undue punishment.

I also wholeheartedly disagree with the tenet that a person's family or significant other will be able to determine sooner than a professional when a fighter is beginning to show decline. By trade, I am a neurologist. That means that almost on a daily basis I see individuals that have suffered head injuries or are developing cognitive problems. There are three reasons why the patient and his family are often the last to know someone is having a problem or will develop one. First, in Dementia Pugilistica (punch-drunk syndrome), judgment, which is controlled by the frontal lobe, is typically affected. Good judgment enables you to understand when you have a problem with your thought processes. Second, your family rarely has complete medical understanding regarding subtle changes. Finally, continued punishment to the head contributes to the development of a dementia, especially as the athlete ages.

As every boxer enters the twilight of his career, it is crucial to seek opinions of those that can be independent, brutally honest, and knowledgeable of the sport and its risks over time.

Ask The Doctor

I am a professional boxer and was cut below my eyebrow for the second time. How long do I need to take off before I can spar again, and what can I do to speed up my recovery time?

Cuts in boxing are a fact of life. However, inadequate healing time increases one's susceptibility to being cut again in the same place and, in the long run, can adversely affect a fighter's success.

The truth is that a cut can take as long as six months to heal back to maximum strength. Obviously, few ring physicians expect a fighter to stay out of the ring that long, but if your cut was sutured quickly and you did not develop an infection, you could go back to sparring. It is crucial for you to wear good protective gear in the gym, and you should not have a scheduled fight for at least two months. These numbers could change in ether direction, depending on your age, skin type, heredity, and facial anatomy. Many factors, including alcohol, steroids, cigarette smoke, and

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

McCullough's medical suspension following his July 2005 loss to Larios is over

anti-inflammatories, such as aspirin and Motrin, lengthen the process.

In the world of plastic surgery, there are numerous products on the market to speed up healing time and reduce scar formation. One such substance is Scarguard Scar Care. It is a topical liquid that quickly dries, covering the scar with a solution containing silicone and vitamin E. It is also believed to help reduce old scars.

The smartest thing to do is to seek advice from your physician before starting any treatment and scheduling your next bout.

After Evander Holyfield fought Larry Donald, it was difficult to understand a word Holyfield said. Two weeks ago, when he was on* Friday Night Fights*, he was very lucid and reasonably clear-tongued. Do you think that a brain can swell and cause problems during and immediately after a fight, and then heal and go back to normal size and function correctly over time?

Dysarthria refers to difficulty in forming words because of weakness of muscles used in speaking. Dysarthric speech is characterized by slurred, imprecise articulation. Tongue movements are usually labored and the rate of speaking may be very slow. Voice quality may be abnormal and excessively nasal, volume may be weak, and drooling may occur.

Slurred speech is a common symptom after a concussion and, in many instances, can improve with time and/or speech therapy. However, this is also seen in boxers who have taken too many headshots through the years. In these instances it becomes irreversible, but can improve to some degree if the athlete refrains from further exposure to trauma.

Severe head injury can induce brain swelling. However, concussion results in chemical and metabolic changes such as decreased cerebral blood flow and increased brain glucose metabolism. In concussion, there is no diffuse or localized swelling, and brain scans using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or computerized tomography (CT) will typically not show changes irrespective of symptoms such as dysarthria.

My fighter was stopped in his last fight from too many punches to the head. He wasn't knocked out, but rather overpowered by a stronger guy. The commission gave him a two-month suspension before he can fight again. Isn't that a bit extreme?

It is imperative that boxers rest between bouts, or they set themselves up for cognitive problems that will not only impair future performances, but also lead to chronic symptoms such as memory loss, confusion, gait imbalance, and slurred speech.

The Association of Boxing Commissions has recommended at least a 30-day suspension for technical knockouts, and 45 days for a knockout. However, based on whether a fighter has had a tough fight, how often this has happened before, the fighter's record, and his postfight exam, it is not unusual to recommend at least a two-month suspension so the boxer's brain can have optimal time to repair itself. This also means the fighter should stay away from sparring for at least 45 days. All postconcussive symptoms should be fully resolved before your fighter resumes any aggressive physical exercise.

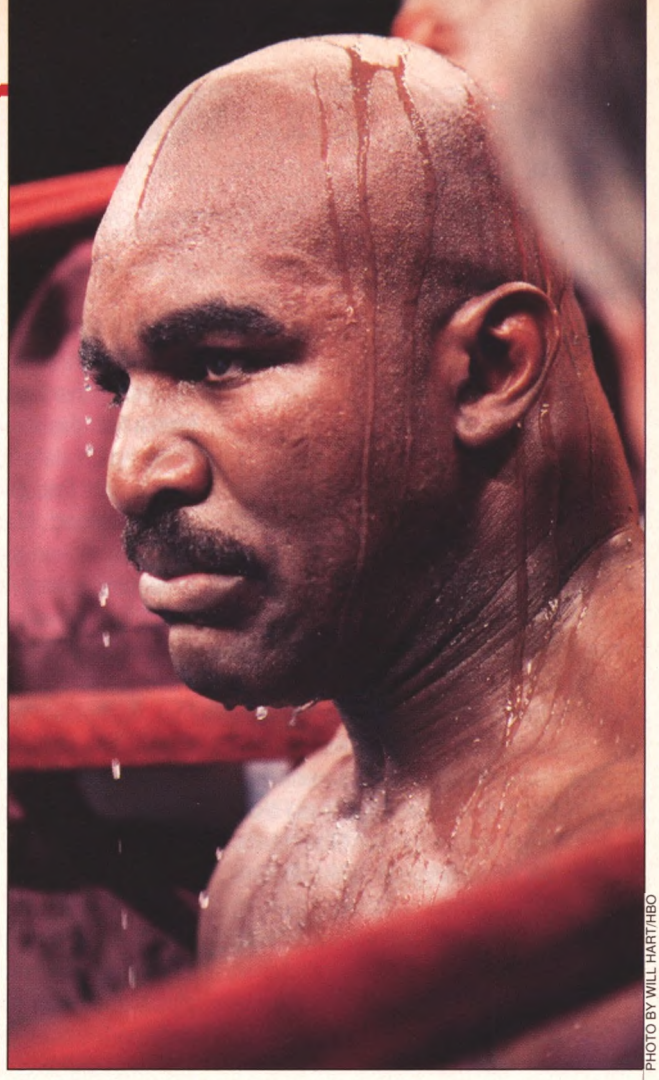


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Holyfield's time off may be responsible for his improved speech

I know ephedra was taken off the market, but there are other similar drugs around you can get with a prescription. Can I take them before I fight to help me lose weight?

Ephedra or ephedrine is an amphetamine-like compound that can stimulate the nervous system and the heart. After numerous cases of heart attack and stroke, the FDA banned the substance and any over-the-counter compounds containing it in 1994. However, ephedrine is synthetically manufactured for treatment of asthma, bronchitis, and allergies, and is available by prescription.

Irrespective of the fact that almost all drug screens test for stimulants, I recommend you never use ephedrine even in training, as the increased blood pressure and stresses on your heart outweigh any benefits in short-term weight loss to justify its use.

Furthermore, to avoid testing positive for an illegal substance such as ephedrine, an athlete would have to stop it several days before the fight. This alone would cause rebound fatigue, slowed reflexes, and increased appetite—all symptoms you would not want the day of a fight. ■

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Praise For Pac-Man

My hat is off to Manny Pacquiao for his impressive knockout of Erik Morales. I am a Morales fan and thought he would once again defeat Pac-Man in the rematch, but Pacquiao is a better fighter than I realized. Manny should without a doubt be ranked the number two pound-for-pound fighter in the world, right behind Floyd Mayweather.

I would love to see Pacquiao fight rematches with Barrera and Juan Manuel Marquez, plus a rubber match with Morales. While I will be rooting for the Mexican fighters, I now have a great respect for the Pac-Man. He is a great fighter.

RICKY FLANAGAN
House Springs, MO

After viewing the Manny Pacquiao-Erik Morales rematch, it's clear to me why Manny won. I felt he would win after hearing the interviews of both fighters. Erik was fighting for Erik, unusual for Mexican warriors. Pacquiao was fighting for an entire country. That's a tough challenge in and of itself.

The most amazing thing of all about Pacquiao, and perhaps the biggest reason his country supports him so strongly, is the fact that he never forgot where he came from. Many boxers from other countries who make it in the United States quickly forget where they came from. It is for this reason that I will always root for Pac-Man whenever he fights.

TROY MORRIS
Ozamiz City, Philippines

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Manny Pacquiao storms into Erik Morales near the end of their rematch. Pac-Man's thrilling kayo victory has added tremendously to his popularity and prompted letters of praise from readers Ricky Flanagan and Troy Morris.

Cheers For Charles

I am very pleased to see a profile in the March 2006 issue of THE RING DOUBLE on a man who potentially could've held world titles in three weight classes if he wasn't a victim of circumstances. I am referring to Ezzard Charles, who I believed was unfairly vilified for beating an aging Joe Louis. As far as I know, there hasn't been a profile on him on the ESPN Classic channel or a biography written about him. I personally feel that his story should be told on the big screen

FREDRICK WELLS
flwells30121@yahoo.com

Trilogy Troubles

I am very pleased that Ivan Goldman's article ("When The Rule-Breakers Win ... It's Time to Reevaluate The System") in the February 2006 issue of THE RING EXTRA points out that Jose Luis Castillo had an advantage by not making weight for his second fight with Diego Corrales. I cannot believe the ignorance of many boxing fans that have claimed that because Corrales weighed two more pounds than Castillo on fight night it meant that Castillo no longer had an advantage. Anybody who has boxed or wrestled can tell you that making weight is a grueling process that can take a toll on a person's body.

I also disagree with the many who say that Corrales could easily outbox Castillo at range and fought the wrong fight. Castillo is not an easy fighter to outbox at range. Floyd Mayweather had problems boxing Castillo at range in both of their bouts and often relied on leaping hops to win their rematch, which Corrales cannot do since his foot speed is nowhere near that of Mayweather. Castillo did plenty of good work on the outside himself, and the left hook that dropped Corrales in the 10th round of their first fight came from the outside. No matter what range Corrales chooses to fight, it will be a very tough fight for him.

I just hope to see a rubber match

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Roy Jones and Antonio Tarver both seem to be doing their best to stay away from each other in this shot from their October 2005 rubber match. Reader Gaelan Behie writes to remind Tarver that it's action, not talk, that sells tickets.

between these two great fighters in which there is no controversy and no accusations of cheating. No mouthpiece spitting, no scale tampering, just another great fight that would put this rivalry among the great trilogies in boxing history.

ERIC WONG
San Francisco, CA

Ring Support

I find some of the responses by certain journalists to THE RING's championship policy quite amusing. It seems like the only argument these guys have involves the Don King-ABC-RING tournament from 30 years ago. I'm glad Nigel Collins wrote back in defense of The Bible of Boxing's rankings in his "THE RING Responds" article posted on thering-online.com.

I care a great deal about this publication and I've never missed an issue since my first one back in 1991. THE RING is not only the oldest and longest running sports publication in our country's history, it is an integral part of the sport itself, the last bridge standing to boxing's past, present, and future.

Regardless of what anyone says, I love THE RING and I stand right beside it. Thank you for all the years of great writing and thanks in advance for the many more to come.

ANDREW WORKMAN
Daytona Beach, FL

I have just finished reading Nigel Collins' article on thering-on.com, responding to recent criticism of THE RING championship policy Actually, "complain" is the correct word, as that's all they are able of doing. Keep up the good work. As long as there is THE RING championship policy, there will be hope among boxing fans—even in Italy!

PAOLO CONSIGLIO
boxingbuff@tiscali.it

Tarver Out Of Touch

There is a growing trend in boxing that is beginning to annoy me: fighters such as Antonio Tarver who seem totally out of touch with reality as to where they stand as a marketable fighter and the money they are entitled to. To hear Tarver say that he is now "the biggest draw in boxing" after outpointing a remnant of Roy Jones made me sick. Might I remind Tarver that he was booed in his hometown during his third fight with Jones? Other statements that seem to so easily flow from his mouth, like, "if the money's not right" or "he's not on my level" are exactly what's wrong with the game today. Who is on your level, Antonio? A shadow of Roy, an ancient Mike Tyson, or maybe it is Rocky Balboa!

Take a good look around, Antonio. The big draws, such as Erik Morales, Manny Pacquiao, Marco Antonio Barrera, Oscar De La Hoya, Arturo Gatti, and Fernando Vargas never openly talk about fighting for money. They talk about national or regional pride, avenging a loss, or winning another world title. Most importantly, they fight the big fights that the fans want to see. And that's the reason why they are big draws.

GAELAN BEHIE
gaelan_8@hotmail.com

Poetic Justice

Carlos Baldomir is my new hero. While I don't think he has the tools to be the welterweight champion for long, on one glorious night he stuck it to the alphabet gang by refusing to pay sanctioning fees. He had the foresight to realize that THE RING's recognition would be enough to guarantee him financial security.

Perhaps more shocking than Baldomir's performance was that the judges actually did the right thing for once and awarded him the decision. When was the last time an unknown foreigner got the decision in a close fight against a popular hometown hero who also happens to be an undisputed champion with a mega-fight on the horizon?

This result was a case of poetic justice: Rather than responding to Judah's immaturity and disgusting lack of sportsmanship, such as his low blow during the referee's instructions, Baldomir simply put on a workmanlike performance and took the title.

ROBERT RODRIGUEZ
Lawrence, Kansas ■

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Carlos Baldomir's shocking upset of Zab Judah made a lot of fans happy, including Robert Rodriguez, who was turned off by Judah's lack of sportsmanship. Rodriguez was also pleasantly surprised by the work of the three official judges.

Looking Ahead

By Joe Santoliquito

Byrd Flies Back To Germany

When **Chris Byrd** defends the IBF heavyweight title on April 22 at the SAP-Arena, in Mannheim, Germany, we're going to see a different Byrd than the one who lost a unanimous decision to **Wladimir Klitschko** in 2000. So says Byrd, at least.

Byrd, 39-2-1 (20), felt mistreated the last time he fought in Germany, October 14, 2000, in Cologne. The American experienced every little inconvenience a fighter *doesn't* need prior to a major fight, such as staying in hotel accommodations across the town from the venue where he was fighting. K2 Promotions, Klitschko's promotional company, guaranteed Byrd that he'll get first-class treatment this time and that the event will run smoothly.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Byrd says his rematch with Wladimir Klitschko will have a different ending than the first

Another heavy albatross was lifted from Byrd's shoulders in January when he settled his lawsuit with **Don King**, which released Byrd from his contract with the promoter.

"It's a great feeling going into a fight without all the stress and worries about like getting paid what I signed for, or whether or not a fight I'm training for is going to be cancelled," Byrd said. "This is the best I'll fight in years; I'll guarantee that. Now it's all about what goes on in the ring. I finally have peace of mind, and for me that goes a long way in preparing properly for a fight. I can just train without worrying about anything else."

Byrd feels he has to make amends for his last outing, which was a snorefest against **DeVarryl Williamson**, on October 1, 2005, that had the fans in Reno, Nevada, booing throughout much of the fight. Byrd has fought only three times in the last two years, defending the IBF belt against **Andrew Golota** (D 12), **Jameel McCline** (W 12), and Williamson (W 12).

The Klitschko rematch will be shown on HBO, 5 p.m. on a Saturday, and is a great chance for Byrd to showcase his talents to new fans and recoup some old ones.

"This will be a lot different than my fight against DeVarryl," Byrd said. "For one, Klitschko is big-time vulnerable, much more that he was when I first fought him in 2000. Secondly, I've fought a number of big guys since then, and while I would have considered myself more of a finesse fighter then, now I engage a little more. My whole attitude has always been like that. I'm the little guy who will test your heart."

Listen Up

Lightweight **Zahir Raheem** tallied a one-sided victory over **Erik Morales** in September 2005, but as far as boosting his career was concerned, it was as if the fight never took place, and Raheem went into hibernation for six months. Finally, Raheem's impressive victory has earned him another lucrative payday, as he is matched with Brazilian **Acelino Freitas**, on April 29, at The Foxwoods Resort, in Mashantucket, Connecticut. With his slick, counterpunching style and fast hands, Raheem, 27-1 (16), is just as capable of dominating Freitas, 37-1 (32), as he did Morales.

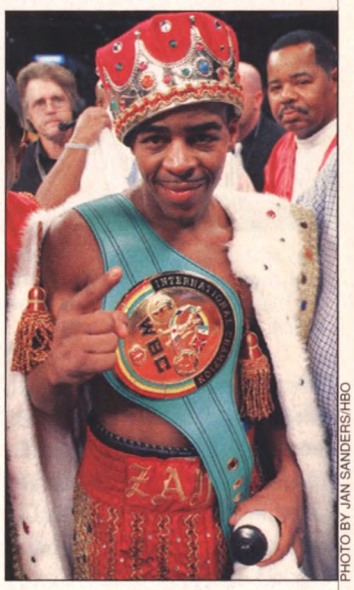


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS/HBO

Raheem gets prove himself again with Freitas

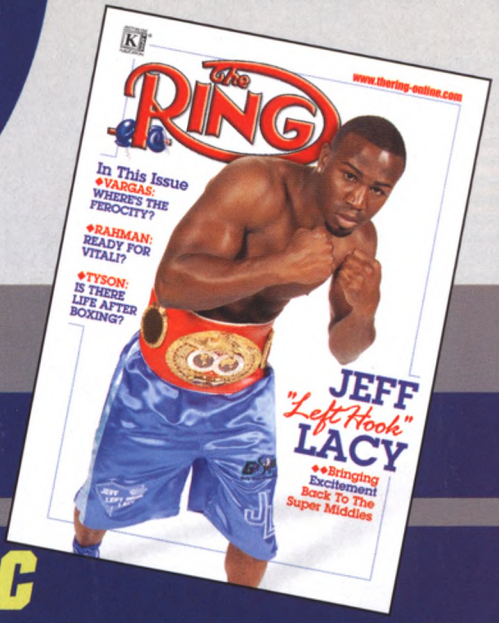
For Freitas, returning to Foxwoods will be like revisiting the scene of a nightmare. It was at Foxwoods were "Popo" suffered his first and only defate, when **Diego Corrales** knocked him down in the eighth, ninth, and 10th rounds, prompting Freitas to tell referee **Michael Ortega** that he did not want to continue.

The Raheem-Freitas bout is an interesting crossroads fight for both: Will Raheem prove he's really as good as he looked against Morales? Is Freitas really as deadly a puncher as his earlier record indicates, or a frontrunner, willing to quit at the first sign of adversity? We'll see ... Reigning lightweight champion Corrales is set to face **Jose Luis Castillo** on June 3 in their rubber match. Showtime will broadcast the fight, which will most likely be held at Las Vegas' Thomas & Mack Center ... Two week later, world middleweight champion **Jermain Taylor** will *not* to take the easy hometown tune-up, as many speculated. Instead, he'll fight THE RING's number-one contender **Winky Wright**, probably the Taylor's most dangerous challenger. A June 17 date is established, though no venue was set as this issue went to press. ■

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Taylor will risk everything against Wright

The RING



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